

# Cloth Ears at Work

## *Aural Elements in the Theatre Plays of Tom Stoppard*

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Cloth Ears at Work: Aural Elements in the Theatre Plays of Tom Stoppard

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IV

# Abstract

This thesis investigates Tom Stoppard's inclusion of music and other aural effects (including juxtaposed silence) in his stage plays from 1967 to 2015. The analysis includes both diegetic and non-diegetic aural elements (the former being where aural elements are fixed within the narrative, and the latter being a form of commentary to the narrative, available to the audience but not to the on-stage characters). With particular focus on *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Travesties*, *Arcadia* and *Rock 'n' Roll* the thesis examines the way aural elements highlight themes, perform as temporal and geo-physical markers and define structure. Furthermore, the thesis scrutinizes resonant and dissonant choices of music and other aural effects and explores the audience's emotional reception in addition to their intellectual response to the spoken text and on-stage action. The analysis of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* concentrates on the author's inter-textual referencing of music from *Hamlet* as a structural and thematic device. Further comparison of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* with *Travesties* examines how aural elements underscore a sense of artifice in keeping with the tenets of the Theatre of the Absurd. In the case of *Travesties*, the thesis also discusses the additional effects of music and other aural effects on the development and audience reception of characters. The third play, *Arcadia*, exemplifies the use of off-stage sound effects as thematic signalers. In addition, the thesis proposes that aural elements in *Arcadia* blur temporal boundaries, thus conflating the play's two time periods. In the case of *Rock 'n' Roll*, in which music is used as a chronological marker, the thesis demonstrates how aural elements and, especially, music juxtaposed with silence create receptive dissonance. Building on Stoppard's acknowledged mastery of the spoken word in performance literature, this thesis seeks to fill a perceived gap in the analysis of the theatre plays of Stoppard and show the multiple ways sound and silence elicit and expand an audience's response, and confirm and/or contradict their expectations.

‘...the musician casts the meshwork of his tones to net us,  
so to speak; or, with his wonder-drops of sound he dews  
our brain as if by magic, and robs it of the power of seeing  
aught save our own inner world.’

Richard Wagner<sup>1</sup>

‘Music is a world within itself,  
With a language we all understand.  
...  
You can feel it all over.  
You can feel it all over, people.

Stevie Wonder<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Wagner, *Actors and Singers* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 75 (translation: William Ashton Ellis).

<sup>2</sup> Stevie Wonder, ‘Sir Duke’ from *Songs In The Key Of Life* (Motown Records, 1976).

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## Introduction

*Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears – soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony*

Lorenzo to Jessica  
*The Merchant of Venice*<sup>3</sup>

Beginning a thesis on Tom Stoppard with the words of William Shakespeare is to emulate a technique prevalent in the stagecraft of this modern-day playwright, for whom the past seems to be an almost endless source of fascination and ideas. As with the majority of investigations into Shakespeare's written work, there is a tendency for any analysis of Stoppard's plays to focus on the effect of the spoken word upon his audience. Ira B. Nadel is only one of many writers whose introductory paragraphs attach adjectives such as 'dazzling' to Stoppard's role as 'wordsmith'.<sup>4</sup> While agreeing with this assessment, I propose to expand the discussion beyond this almost exclusive focus on the characters' dialogue.

Some critics have looked (and listened) beyond the immediacy of the spoken word in Shakespeare's texts to explore the ways in which music and other aural elements might interplay with the spoken word, and to discuss the effects such interplays may have on the reception of the play by its audience. In *Shakespeare and Music*, David Lindley defines the Renaissance belief that 'mind and the body were interconnected' and that 'music might cure melancholy'. He quotes Shakespeare's contemporary, Timothy Bright, who, in 1586, writes:

So not only cheerfull musicke in a generalitie, but such of that kind as most rejoyseth, is to be sounded in melancholicke eares... That contrarily, which is solemne, and still: as dumpes, and fancies and sett musicke, are hurtfull in this case, and serve rather for a disordered rage, and intemperate mirth, to reclaim with mediocritie, then to allure the spirits, to stirre the bloud, and to attenuate the humours, which is (if the harmonie be wisely applied) effectually wrought by musicke.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, contemporaries of Tom Stoppard have written surprisingly little about the ways in which this author 'attenuate(s) the humours' of his audience.

In my opinion, there can be little doubt that the emotional response of the audience to Stoppard's texts owes a debt to effects 'wrought by musicke' and other aural elements. In

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<sup>3</sup> William Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, ed., John Drakakis, (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2010), 5.1.55-57.

<sup>4</sup> Ira B. Nadel, 'Writing the Life of Tom Stoppard', *Journal of Modern Literature* 27.3 (2004) 19-29; 19.

<sup>5</sup> David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 31.

agreement with S. Renee Dechert's claim that music 'functions as a form of rhetorical discourse every bit as important as the lines characters speak'<sup>6</sup>, I will argue that audience response to Stoppard's works is significantly constructed by effects other than the spoken words, and that aural elements such as music, sound effects, and even silence, can be understood to create more direct visceral connections to an audience and, by doing so, may further enhance the more obvious textual devices Stoppard uses to confirm or contradict his audience's expectations. This thesis, therefore, will explore the effects 'wroughted' by Stoppard in a career spanning half a century, with particular attention given to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Travesties*, *Arcadia* and *Rock 'n' Roll*. Lastly, it will seek to fill a perceived gap in the analysis of Stoppard's performance literature and attempt to show the multiple ways in which the playwright includes aural elements in his theatre plays as a means of both eliciting and expanding the audience's response.

Stoppard himself is particularly forthcoming about elements in his plays which complement the spoken word. Nadel cites Stoppard and his particular enthusiasm for music in his plays: 'the moments he 'adores' in his work are those where 'the music affects what I've written or what is being performed.'<sup>7</sup> In an early interview, the author also draws clear parallels between sound and text:

'My plays for me – in my head, before anyone gets hold of a text – make a certain quality of noise, which rises and falls at certain places, and slows and speeds up at certain places, and much of our rehearsal consists of my trying to explain what this noise is like, and trying to get the actors to make this noise';<sup>8</sup>

This awareness of the communicative possibilities of 'noise' cannot be under-estimated, given Stoppard's experience as a writer of radio plays, among them *Albert's Bridge* and *If You're Glad I'll Be Frank*. Well before it was adapted for the theatre *Artist Descending a Staircase* was written for radio: 'you hear footsteps, a stealthy creak. The sleeping man stirs, then he awakens. You hear a thump, followed by wood cracking and the sound of a man falling down a series of steps'.<sup>9</sup> Diana Maychick also quotes Stoppard: 'If I could, I'd like to write a complete play without words'<sup>10</sup>. In addition, Stoppard does not hesitate to underscore this

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<sup>6</sup> S. Renee Dechert, 'My Boyfriend's in the Band!: *Buffy* and the Rhetoric of Music' in Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery, eds, *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2002), 218-226; 219.

<sup>7</sup> Ira B. Nadel, *Double Act: A life of Tom Stoppard* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd, 2002), 326.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald Hayman, 'Double Acts: Tom Stoppard and Peter Wood' in Paul Delaney, ed, *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 145-149; 147.

<sup>9</sup> Diana Maychick, 'Stoppard Ascending' in Paul Delaney, ed, *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 231-34; 231.

<sup>10</sup> Maychick, 'Stoppard Ascending', 232.

parallel in describes his process: 'I write with a very dominant sense of rhythm in the dialogue, and to me the orchestration of that dialogue has a kind of inevitability.'<sup>11</sup> Yet, paradoxically, Stoppard has belittled his musical understanding: 'I can't read music; I can't talk music; I can't even hum.'<sup>12</sup> Of his 1975 interview with Stoppard about *Travesties*, Ross Wetzsteon writes: "You use more music in this play than ever before..." I begin, and Stoppard suddenly becomes animated. "Yes, yes, yes! I have cloth ears," he says excitedly. "I have no understanding of music at all. That was all inserted by the director."<sup>13</sup> Stoppard's claims of having 'no understanding of music' and 'cloth ears' may be perceived, however, as somewhat disingenuous, and seem quite contradictory when investigating his inclusion of the specific directions in his plays, both in terms of allusion, to underscore themes, and to create dramatic tensions. The use of music in his first published play: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, in 1967, is especially allusive, thus demonstrating the playwright's skill at 'understanding' the potential of music as an intertextual link to *Hamlet* in addition to the intertextual spoken text. Stoppard also acknowledges the emotional receptivity of the individual to music, most directly through the character of Henry in *The Real Thing* who believed 'that the Righteous Brothers' recording of 'You've Lost That Loving Feeling' on the London label was possibly the most haunting, the most deeply moving noise ever produced by the human spirit'.<sup>14</sup> Finally, according to theatre director Trevor Nunn, with whom Stoppard has worked extensively, the author 'is a crazy, obsessive rock 'n' roll fan' who listens to music constantly while he works.<sup>15</sup> Nadel quotes Stoppard as having 'told one journalist, 'I tend to write each play to one record'... While he wrote *Jumpers*, he played John Lennon's 'Mother'.'<sup>16</sup>

Despite his claims of ignorance, Stoppard is ever open to an aural pun. In a conversation from 1979, Gussow queries Stoppard about *Jumpers*: 'a vase drops and you hear the sound of a trumpet being kicked downstairs', to which Stoppard responds: 'A sound pun. It's very difficult to know why things are funny.'<sup>17</sup> But, whatever the difficulty in explaining

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<sup>11</sup> Giles Gordon, 'Tom Stoppard' in Paul Delaney, ed, *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 15-23; 20.

<sup>12</sup> Robb J. Cooper, 'Face to Face: Tom Stoppard: The Dissonance of Dissidents', *Back Stage: The Performing Arts Weekly* (22 Nov. 2002), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ross Wetzsteon, 'Tom Stoppard Eats Steak Tartare with Chocolate Sauce' in Paul Delaney, ed, *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 80-84; 84.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Stoppard, *The Real Thing* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 25.

<sup>15</sup> Trevor Nunn. Interview. A multimedia link from Ben Brantley's 'Going to Prague in 1968, but Not Without His Vinyl.' Rev. of *Rock 'n' Roll. The New York Times*. 5 Nov. 2007. Web. 6 July 2014. n. page. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/05/theater/reviews/05rock.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/05/theater/reviews/05rock.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)>

<sup>16</sup> Nadel, *Double Act*, 325.

<sup>17</sup> Mel Gussow, *Conversations with Stoppard* (London: Nick Hern Books Ltd, 1995), 68.

the process, Stoppard has an intuitive sense that it will work. Stoppard's intuition offers one such, lengthy pun as a backdrop to the intricacies of the opening scene of *Hapgood*. Set in a men's changing room, a series of spies come and go, creating a confusing interaction of briefcase exchanges. All the while, '*One of the showers is evidently in use - we can hear it.*' This physical theatre takes some time but the '*shower continues to run.*' Finally, at the conclusion of the action, the '*shower stops running. There is a pause, and then the occupant of the shower, Hapgood, approaches, somewhat encumbered by a briefcase ... and an umbrella which she is at the moment taking down and shaking out.*' Stoppard's awareness of further visual and aural humour upon the emergence of a fully-clothed, female, spy chief from a shower room (established by sound effects) is demonstrated by the author including the following suggestion in his stage directions: 'Note: All the foregoing action may be done to music and lightly choreographed.'<sup>18</sup>

Among the playwright's many claims to fame, he is consistent in the expertise with which he wrong-foots his audience and he delights in epigrammatic confusion in order to confound the audience's expectations: 'I like to proceed by a series of ambushes, not necessarily anything as dramatic as an ambush but perhaps the word *quirk* might be useful here, a series of quirks, a series of small unimportant surprises...'<sup>19</sup> Aural elements are put to work here as well, and Elizabeth Hale Winkler observes:

'Music and song are thus important instruments in Stoppard's dislocation technique. Abrupt changes in content and in presentation styles, from serious argument to sung passages or dance sequences, help to achieve his intended effect of total comic disruption and refutation. Starting with techniques derived from Beckett, Stoppard develops his own special brand of comic disorientation. Audience reliance on theatrical habit and consistency is undermined.'<sup>20</sup>

One particularly fine example of this 'special brand' is the opening scene of his 1972 play *Jumpers*, in which music and sound effects act to increase the various states of confusion, represented physically by Dotty and, philosophically, by George. When the music begins, momentarily, the audience hears the '*introduction for 'Shine On Harvest Moon'*': a most recognizable, popular twentieth-century classic. Stoppard's stage directions read 'Dotty dries' (she cannot find the words), and '*Introduction repeated*'. Despite the backing of her

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<sup>18</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Tom Stoppard: Plays Five: Arcadia; The Real Thing; Night and Day; Indian Ink; Hapgood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 489-593; 489-93.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Mayne, 'Arts Commentary' in Paul Delaney, ed, *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 33-37; 34.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Hale Winkler, *The Function of Song in Contemporary British Drama* (Cranbury, NJ., London and Ontario: Associated University Press Inc., 1990), 250.

offstage guests, even when Dotty finally sings she goes '*wrong immediately*': 'I want to spoon to my honey I'll croon love's June or July.' After she apologizes and leaves, her departure is marked by a '*Drum roll*' and '*cries of disappointment*.'<sup>21</sup>

Jim Hunter states that what Stoppard establishes through the character's muddling of the lyrics 'is funnier at that moment than she is pathetic...her confusion of moon songs begins to be in itself a comic creation, not just disintegration.'<sup>22</sup> In light of the stage direction '*cries of disappointment change to cries of delight*', which indicates a definitive shift to the comedic, Hunter's claim stands. The comic state on-stage is then extrapolated in the form of the waiter/concierge Crouch, who is '*bewildered*' by (for him) the unseen stripper on the trapeze and the comic confusion is heightened by cheers and (un)helpful shouts from the offstage guests until Crouch is finally '*knocked arse over tip*' and sent spinning into a blackout, accompanied by the '*crash of broken glass*.'<sup>23</sup> However, despite the madcap arrival of the Jumpers with their mediocre acrobatics, Stoppard tones down the comedic visuals by requiring '*discreet musical accompaniment*',<sup>24</sup> which, followed by several more failed attempts by Dotty to find her way through her song, suggests 'disintegration'. Stoppard undermines the comedy and, with the murder of one of the Jumpers, he unravels a string of contradictory soundscapes to reassert Dotty's helplessness. Sitting '*on the bed, the corpse slumped over her knees*', Dotty '*glances at the TV. She turns up the volume*' and hears a news report of 'Astronaut Oates' deserted on the moon, then '*changes the channel*' to '*a big procession... military in tone (brass band music) but celebratory: for five seconds*.' On the next channel, she hears '*a commercial: for three seconds*', and then the '*moon programme again*' before switching back to the '*Military music*' which continues in its 'celebratory' fashion, in direct contradiction to Dotty, who '*looks gloomily, helplessly at the corpse*' of the Jumper.<sup>25</sup> Such a visual and aural impact is arguably more 'ambush' than 'quirk'. In the first few minutes, with significant effect from numerous aural elements, Stoppard completely discombobulates his audience.

Theatre theorists such as Colin Counsell and Mark Fortier argue for a broader reading of theatre texts other than the written words of monologue and dialogue through which characters are developed. As Counsell reminds the reader in *Signs of Performance*: '[T]heatre proffers meaning not solely in its overt utterances – the character's words and actions, the

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<sup>21</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Jumpers*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1988), 9.

<sup>22</sup> Jim Hunter, *Tom Stoppard's Plays* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1982), 81.

<sup>23</sup> Stoppard, *Jumpers*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Stoppard, *Jumpers*, 10-12.

<sup>25</sup> Stoppard, *Jumpers*, 14.

‘author’s message’ – but also in the very form in which these utterances are conveyed.’<sup>26</sup>

Fortier supports this analytical expansiveness of ‘the friction between language-based theory and the nonverbal aspects of theatre’<sup>27</sup> arguing that: ‘[T]o treat everything as language or as dominated by language seems a distortion of the nature of theatre as rooted in the physical and the sensual, as much as it is in words and ideas’<sup>28</sup> Fortier further suggests that theatre can entail ‘the engagement in lived experience between the individual consciousness and reality which manifests itself not as a series of linguistic signs but as sensory and mental phenomena – the ‘world’ is what we encounter in perception and reflection’.<sup>29</sup>

This idea of sound as an integral ingredient for emotional expression is not a new one. Diderot writes: ‘In music, the pleasure of sensation depends on a particular disposition not only of the ear but of the entire nervous system...How does it happen then that of the three arts that imitate nature, the one whose expression is most arbitrary and the least precise speaks the most powerfully to the soul?’<sup>30</sup> In his observations on musicians, Richard Wagner remarks: ‘We have seen that the musician’s kindred glossary extends from the scream of horror to the suave play of soothing murmurs.’<sup>31</sup> More recently, however, theories have emerged which move the investigation of theatre and literature studies beyond the realm of the humanities and into those of neurological investigation. Therefore, a variety of recent studies and publications in the field of neuroscience and neuro-acoustics will act as cornerstones for this analysis. These will include *The Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre* by Stephen Di Benedetto, in which he claims that ‘sound that is generated by voice or musical instruments and environmental sound ... triggers visceral sensations, which in turn evoke mood in the context of performance’.<sup>32</sup> An example of this occurs in *Shipwreck*, the second play in Stoppard’s trilogy *The Coast of Utopia*, when the sound effects of silence and thunder are juxtaposed as an ‘environmental sound’ designed to trigger emotive recognition within the audience. Natalie has exited, expressing concern for

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<sup>26</sup> Colin Counsell, *Signs of Performance: An Introduction to Twentieth-Century Theatre* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2004), 6

<sup>27</sup> Mark Fortier, *Theory/ theatre: an introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Fortier, *Theory/ theatre*, 3-4.

<sup>29</sup> Fortier, *Theory/ theatre*, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Rosen, *Freedom and the Arts: Essays on Music and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 11.

<sup>31</sup> Wagner, *Actors and Singers*, 75.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 125.

her children and is calling to them off-stage. Stoppard directs that ‘*After a pause, during which Natalie can be heard distantly, silence falls*’, and then, ‘*Distant thunder*.’<sup>33</sup>

Another of Di Benedetto’s claims is that the introduction of sound and the way it creates an aural landscape can occur in a variety of ways: as a reconfirmation of an audience’s expectation or as a contradiction to those expectations. He writes that ‘having our defenses down and being swept up by the experience of the moment is at the heart of the value of the theatrical event. The web of sensations that has been crafted for our benefit is a means of engaging us dynamically with the world...To excite our senses is to monitor the material world around us’.<sup>34</sup> Heidi McKee echoes this sentiment, stating that sound ‘is not something to be added as an afterthought’ and that it and all its elements ‘play crucial roles in such important areas as setting the mood, building atmosphere, carrying the narrative, directing attention, and developing themes.’<sup>35</sup>

I propose that Stoppard’s aural elements are no ‘afterthought’; the author’s 1978 play *Night and Day* starts in a soundscape designed to confront and disconcert the audience on a visceral and, therefore, physical level. As Hunter observes it ‘opens with (apparently) a helicopter hovering in the flies and (actually) a jeep being driven onstage... accompanied by the deafening sound of machine-gun fire.’<sup>36</sup> The pulsating beat of helicopter wings, the roaring entrance and exit of the jeep’s motor and the ‘deafening’ staccato of a ‘machine-gun’ are all designed to excite and stimulate the senses. The audience associates the sounds with conflict and war. At the very start of the play, it is an abrupt introduction to an imaginary world in which all is not well. Stoppard uses the impact of the sound at the play’s opening to create an immediate emotional connection between stage, actors and audience. Hunter writes that this ‘shock opening of very loud noise and apparent slaughter impresses on our minds and senses the violence which is not far away and which is discussed at intervals throughout the action.’<sup>37</sup> This impression is fundamental to the play’s thematic development. In a double-whammy, Stoppard then disconcerts his audience again; the opening scene is not ‘real’ but the dream of the man found asleep in a bucolic garden setting. While many such false starts and other dislocation techniques are brought about by the author’s wordplays, numerous examples

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<sup>33</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Shipwreck: The Coast of Utopia Part II* (New York: Grove Press, 2002), 20.

<sup>34</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 67.

<sup>35</sup> Heidi McKee, ‘Sound matters: Notes toward the analysis and design of sound in multimodal web texts’, *Computers and Composition* 23 (2006) 335–354; 352.

<sup>36</sup> Hunter, *Tom Stoppard’s Plays*, 39.

<sup>37</sup> Hunter, *Tom Stoppard’s Plays*, 58.

will be examined, in which, without a word being spoken, the playwright forces his audience to respond to a sensory landscape, only to pull their assumptive rug from under them.

In addition to Di Benedetto, I will refer to the work of theorists Bruce McConachie and Elizabeth F. Hart, both of whom follow in the footsteps of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in subscribing to the idea of ‘embodied realism’.<sup>38</sup> In their introduction to *Performance and Cognition: Theatre studies and the cognitive turn*, they propose that ‘mental concepts arise, fundamentally, from the experience of the body in the world’ and that, as “neural beings”, humans must make meaning with certain “spatial relations” and “bodily action” schemas along with other mental constructs arising from the interplay of experience and patterning in the brain.’<sup>39</sup> One can argue that this physical relationship between the aural elements in Stoppard’s plays and their reception belongs to the liminal space where theatre studies meets the emerging field of neuroscience because ‘the reception of performance art differs fundamentally from that to other art forms since, unlike even the visual arts, it requires the immediate and interactive presence – the embodiment – of its performers and receivers.’<sup>40</sup> This theory of embodiment can be taken further. McConachie and Hart argue that the use of a primary aural metaphor like sound, within performance literature, ‘differs from reading in that it allows for the direct perception ...of specific sights, sounds, textures, climate, etc.’<sup>41</sup> What they suggest, in short, is that because sound occurs as a specific, physical textual component ‘possible interpretations of a theatre event’ by the audience are fewer, compared to the interpretations of a reader of a novel whose ‘almost purely symbol-driven reconstruction of narrative worlds will allow for greater diversity.’<sup>42</sup> This suggests, then, that Stoppard narrows his audience’s focus and perceptions through the inclusion of aural elements in his dialogue. When, for example, in *The Invention of Love*, ‘The ‘Marseillaise’ is faintly heard’, Stoppard has Chamberlain comment: ‘The ‘Marseillaise’. That’s unusual, isn’t it? – for the Queen’s Jubilee’, to which the deceased A.E. Housman replies: ‘Oscar Wilde was in France, on the coast near Dieppe. I’d sent him my book when he came out of prison.’ Then Stoppard introduces ‘The faint sound of children singing the ‘Marseillaise’... overtaken by Oscar Wilde’s strong fluting voice reciting.’<sup>43</sup> Stoppard seems focused on creating a positive

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<sup>38</sup> Bruce McConachie and F.Elizabeth Hart, ‘Introduction’ in Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart, eds, *Performance and Cognition: Theatre studies and the cognitive turn*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

<sup>39</sup> McConachie and Hart. *Performance and Cognition*, 2006, 2.

<sup>40</sup> McConachie and Hart, *Performance and Cognition*. 2006. 15.

<sup>41</sup> McConachie and Hart, *Performance and Cognition*. 2006. 16.

<sup>42</sup> McConachie and Hart, *Performance and Cognition*. 2006. 16.

<sup>43</sup> Tom Stoppard, *The Invention of Love* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1997), 91.



perception of Wilde's self-imposed exile with the anthem's associations to liberty, fraternity and equality, aligned with the strength of Wilde's voice. Wilde may be missing the 'Queen's Jubilee' but he is liberated from her laws. More recently, in *The Hard Problem*, Stoppard introduces the sound of 'fireworks', which are, at first, a 'distant noise' but 'continue sporadically, and stop'.<sup>44</sup> Here he uses the focusing effect of the sound to make a direct thematic link to Hilary's loss, having been forced, as a teenager, to adopt out her daughter, born on 'Guy Fawkes night! The sky was exploding'.<sup>45</sup>

A further theory relevant to this thesis is Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's theory of 'conceptual blending' which McConachie and Hart explain as 'the mental synthesizing of concepts from different areas of cognition' and 'ubiquitous in human imagination'.<sup>46</sup> There is, they argue, a wide range 'of what Fauconnier and Turner call "vital relations": change, identity, space, time, cause-effect, part-whole, representation, role, analogy, dis-analogy, property, similarity, category, intentionality, and uniqueness'.<sup>47</sup> Stoppard's use of aural elements can be said to assist in 'conceptual blending' by inciting physical, non-intellectual reactions or by compressing a vast array of associative information into the briefest of interactive moments with the audience, such as in *Salvage* when Stoppard offers a momentary image of Turgenev: 'In a 'soundscape' of waves crashing against rocks, with sea-birds shrill in the blasts of wind-noise...a windswept figure (Turgenev) stands dramatised by the surrounding dark'.<sup>48</sup> As Tobin Nellhaus writes: 'performance strategies embrace the entire arena of materials and techniques that playwrights, actors ...and other theatre personnel use or assume when constructing a play' and that these include 'expected audience behavioral norms', which, although not entirely predictable, tend to follow a relatively narrow range of reactions.<sup>49</sup> Fortier writes of 'a play called *Sick* (in which) a tape loop repeated over and over at ear-splitting volume a short musical crescendo. After several minutes the audience member was inside the monotonous discomfort of the experience as the sick person is inside his or her pain. When the music suddenly stopped, the inescapable difference between sickness and relief was made *physically present* (my emphasis)'.<sup>50</sup> In terms of emotional reception, Martin

<sup>44</sup> Tom Stoppard, *The Hard Problem* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), 65-66.

<sup>45</sup> Stoppard, *The Hard Problem*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> McConachie and Hart, *Performance and Cognition*. 2006. 19.

<sup>47</sup> McConachie and Hart, *Performance and Cognition*. 2006. 19.

<sup>48</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Salvage: The Coast of Utopia Part III*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2002), 82.

<sup>49</sup> Tobin Nellhaus, 'Performance strategies, image schemas, and communication frameworks' in Bruce McConachie and F.Elizabeth Hart, eds, *Performance and Cognition: Theatre studies and the cognitive turn* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 76-94; 77.

<sup>50</sup> Fortier. *Theory/ theatre*, 39.

Meisel observes: ‘There is...the sound...with no obvious source, identity or evident meaning, that Chekhov calls for in the second act of *The Cherry Orchard*—a mysterious reverberation like that of a breaking string, filling the twilight with poignant mystery and changing the scale of the human events we have been witnessing.’<sup>51</sup>

Throughout the thesis, I will use the phrase ‘performance literature’, rather than ‘drama literature’ to differentiate between Stoppard’s insistence that ‘[P]lays are events rather than texts. They’re written to happen, not to be read’<sup>52</sup>, and the idea of ‘drama’ as the written word excluding the theatrical, experiential event. Using the former term will hopefully avoid what Fortier observes as ‘the tendency for literary theory and literary studies to think of theatrical activity as drama rather than theatre’<sup>53</sup> and that ‘a study of theatre which does not see its relation to performance in general has made an artificial and limiting distinction.’<sup>54</sup> My intention is to expand rather than limit the study of Stoppard’s oeuvre, and my analysis, therefore, will show how the inclusion of aural elements in Stoppard’s theatre texts is directly related ‘to performance’.

This ‘study of theatre’ through text has also, arguably, improved. In *How Plays Work: Reading and Performance*, Meisel observes the benefits to modern-day play readers: ‘the more oblique stage directions inherent in plays prior to the twentieth century were made more ‘reader-friendly’ by George Bernard Shaw who ‘abandon[ed] some of the notation that, ...served the purposes of production more than those of pleasurable reading’.<sup>55</sup> One can see this Shavian tradition continued in Stoppard’s work, as his stage directions seem more than unusually well-crafted to the general reader. It is also worth remembering that most of the published and publically-available texts are produced after a play’s premiere production and are not original production scripts. Again, in Stoppard’s case, these editions seem so finely worded that it is possible to doubt that this effort is being made for the actors alone.

Furthermore, while the experience of seeing a play and hearing its aural effects ‘live’ is a very different experience from that of reading a script, the printed ‘non-live’ textual version of the play actually lends itself, in my opinion, to an analysis of aural elements more readily than a play observed during performance. This is because it presents an unchanging reference in printed form as opposed to the more fleeting images of a staged performance with its inherent (and possibly distracting) visual stimulation. Meisel is clear in his opinion that a

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<sup>51</sup> Martin Meisel, *How Plays Work: Reading and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46.

<sup>52</sup> Gussow, *Conversations*, 37.

<sup>53</sup> Fortier, *Theory/ theatre*, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Fortier, *Theory/ theatre*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Meisel, *How Plays Work*, 4.

reader trained in performance literature has a similar potential to a reader interested in music: ‘Reading plays has much in common with reading musical scores.’<sup>56</sup> With this in mind, I propose that one’s ability to analyze a published play as performance literature is only limited by one’s knowledge of the subject.

In any investigation of performance literature, there is also the question of the definitive text. Nadel writes that Stoppard ‘finds audience response crucial and the idea of a definitive text untenable’ and ‘bends the work to the needs of the performance, the theatre and the decisions of the director.’<sup>57</sup> With this in mind, I intend to focus exclusively on those aural elements written in final, published versions of Stoppard’s plays. This means excluding any directorial choices, for example: the specific choice of the song ‘Louise’ in the original production of *Travesties*:

“Tsara’s entrance – that entrance to the tune of ‘Louise’... That entrance! I worked for over a year on this play! Over a year! And precious moments like that have almost nothing to do with what I wrote! Peter Wood took my play as a starting point and created these *precious magic moments*...*I turned my bowels over* for a year on this play, and these things have nothing to do with what I wrote! Nothing to do with it!”<sup>58</sup>

The entrance Stoppard is referring to reads: ‘(TZARA enters)...(*This Tzara (there is to be another) is a Rumanian nonsense. His entrance might be set to appropriate music.*)’.<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, Stoppard’s final enthusiastic ‘Nothing to do with it!’ is less than precise, and ignores his previous observation that Wood has used the play ‘as a starting point’, including the instruction that the entrance ‘might be set to appropriate music’. Despite his denial that ‘these things have nothing to do with what I wrote’ Stoppard’s stage direction seems to demonstrate his understanding of the need for an aural element at this particular juncture in the play. For the purpose of this thesis, however, only aural elements specifically listed in the published text will be considered.

In addition, any analysis of performance literature must take into consideration the inclusion or exclusion of framing effects: ‘the bookends of a production (which) exist outside the actual action of the play...In musical terminology, the preshow...a “prelude,” the entr’acte (at intermission) a “bridge,” and the curtain call a “coda.”’<sup>60</sup> These, in short, are mostly confined to the music played prior to the opening of the play, during intermission, and

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<sup>56</sup> Meisel, *How Plays Work*, 1.

<sup>57</sup> Nadel, *Double Act*, 252

<sup>58</sup> Wetzsteon, ‘Tom Stoppard Eats Steak Tartare with Chocolate Sauce’ 84.

<sup>59</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Travesties* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1975), 32.

<sup>60</sup> Deena Kaye and James LeBrecht, *Sound and Music for the Theatre: The Art and Technique of Design* (New York: Back Stage Books, 1992), 20.

as the audience depart. They are framing effects chosen by the directors of Stoppard's plays in addition to those specified by the playwright in his scripts; e.g. the opening of the 2013 Williamstown Theatre production with 'a pulsing background of percussive electronic music by Alex Neuman which in a few bars references the familiar, iconic *James Bond* score.'<sup>61</sup> In an analysis such as this, which focuses on the playwright's published text, such directorial decisions are superfluous, and my analysis will assume, at the very least, a silence prior to the beginning of each scene unless otherwise stated in the text. Another particular example is Stoppard's inclusion of the music of Bach in his 2015 London production of *The Hard Problem*.<sup>62</sup> While used to great effect, in tandem with the brain-circuitry scenography hanging over the stage, the music is not included within the text of the play and is restricted to scene changes. In short, my analysis of aural elements in Stoppard's plays only involves those elements which occur *within* the 'action' of the play, as specified by the playwright.

There is also an inherent problem in any discussion of the reception of performance literature in how one goes about defining the term 'audience': an important factor in an analysis purporting to define potential audience response. As John McGrath observes:

'It is next to impossible to take the existence of various different audiences into account, to codify their possible reactions to a piece of theatre, to evaluate a piece of theatre from *with several frameworks*...we take the point of view of a *normal* person – usually that of a well-fed, white, middle-class, sensitive but sophisticated literary critic and we *universalize* it as *the* response', (original emphases).<sup>63</sup>

While the make-up of audiences may have changed somewhat since McGrath delivered his series of lectures in the early 1980s, it is likely that the 'audience' discussed in this thesis may perpetuate many of the above assumptions. For the purposes of this study, however, I am using the term 'audience' to convey the concept of any potential, complex assembly of numerous individuals with their own independent, multifarious responses. With this definition, it should be a given that I acknowledge the collective response of one audience's en masse individuals as being potentially different to the response of another.

To summarize, this thesis is an analysis of the use of aural elements in four of Stoppard's full-length stage plays: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Travesties*, *Arcadia* and *Rock 'n' Roll*. It will be divided into three chapters. In chapter one, I will show

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<sup>61</sup> Charles Giuliano, 'Kate Burton in Stoppard's Riveting Hapgood.' Theatre review in <www.berkshirefinearts.com> 12 July 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Stoppard, *The Hard Problem*, n .page.

<sup>63</sup> John McGrath, *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984), 2.

how aural elements in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Travesties* perform structural and thematic roles in addition to developing the characters in the play, only to distance the audience from identifying emotionally with these very same characters. In the second chapter, I will demonstrate how, in *Arcadia*, Stoppard uses aural elements such as music and offstage sound effects to blur temporal realities on stage and to underscore the play's complex themes. Do the main characters dance a waltz or an iterated algorithm? In what way can piano playing be reminiscent of chaos theory? Then, in chapter three, in addition to examining the roles aural elements play in *Rock 'n' Roll* as thematic, physical and temporal signalers, I will contrast Stoppard's use of diegetic and non-diegetic musical references on stage. While diegetic references can, for the most part, be understood as a bridging device between character and audience, non-diegetic references present the audience with experiences and associations not shared by the onstage characters, and expand their perceptions beyond those of the on-stage entities. Moving on to the conclusion, I will review my findings in light of my chosen subject.

As with Stoppard's plays, as with this thesis; there is a lot riding on the aural elements. After a slight pause for silence... to build the suspense, what could be more appropriate than the words of Stoppard, from the lips of Rosencrantz:

'I say—! I say...I can hear—thought I heard—music.'<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 20. Unless otherwise stated, all references will be to this edition.

## Chapter One: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Travesties*

And blest are those  
Whose blood and judgement are well co-meddled  
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please.

Hamlet, *Hamlet*<sup>65</sup>

### 1.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter will contrast two of Stoppard's earliest published theatre plays: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) and *Travesties* (1975), and explore the effects created through the playwright's choices of aural elements, such as music, sound effects and silence. The comparison will investigate the ways in which Stoppard uses these various aural elements and will demonstrate the developing sophistication with which the playwright engages his audiences at levels beyond those of the spoken text. I propose that Stoppard's inclusion of aural elements in both these works act as narrative and thematic devices, such as the playing of the recorder in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* which signifies increasingly decisive and fateful encounters for the two characters within the world of *Hamlet*. It will discuss how Stoppard uses aural elements in both plays to articulate the conventions of the then-contemporary Theatre of the Absurd style of performance literature but then begins, in *Travesties*, to select particular aural elements to delineate between the more one-dimensional pastiche and more realistic characterizations of this early work. Finally, I will demonstrate how Stoppard's particular choices of aural elements encourage a multiplicity of audience receptions.

### 1.2 A brief background

Stoppard's initial success as a playwright occurred with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, in which he builds his performance narrative on two lesser characters from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. In *Travesties*, other stylistic and structural similarities are clear, with Stoppard tipping his hat to Oscar Wilde and his play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. What these two very different plays demonstrate is the playwright's bowerbird-like fascination for gathering together intertextual references.

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<sup>65</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds, Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 3.2.64 – 67.

In his particular and competent devotion to the art of intertextual referencing, Stoppard can be said to share much in common with the male bower-bird, an industrious animal which builds structures of both natural, fresh materials and glittering, recycled objects in order to enthrall the female of the species, or, in Stoppard's case, an audience. The practice, however, is neither confined to Stoppard nor certain bird species. Indeed, much of Shakespeare's reputation relies on his deftness in the art of reinterpreting earlier texts. In addition to recycling plot-lines from pre-existing theatre works and stories, Shakespeare was also known for fleshing out many a character's context by providing them with music and associated allusions. For example, in the comedy *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare has Sir Toby denounce Malvolio as 'a Peg-a-Ramsey', in response to Maria's warning that Malvolio will turn Sir Toby 'out of doors' (2.3.70-72).<sup>66</sup> This allusion is to a ballad which includes the line 'Give me my yellow hose' and may have acted as a pre-emptive textual device, suggesting to audiences of the time that the subsequent plotting for Malvolio's downfall by Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria might involve the donning of 'yellow stockings' (2.5.144).<sup>67</sup> As it was with Shakespeare so it is with Stoppard's choice of music in his plays. The latter delights in providing intertextual cross-references and many of the aural references carry with them allusions which might move the audience emotionally and/or intellectually.

The *Cambridge Companion To Stoppard* tells the reader: 'Stoppard's habit of recycling prior texts, which informs virtually all of his work, draws the reader and spectator into the process of transformation by presenting them with familiar literary language (and visual imagery) made strange by an unfamiliar dramatic context.'<sup>68</sup> I propose that the creation of this 'unfamiliar dramatic context' in both plays is significantly assisted by Stoppard's choices of aural elements, and that, in addition to this, they are employed as structural, narrative and thematic devices. For example, one can argue that in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* the sparse use of sound effects makes them all the more significant, since they occur at particular peak moments in the development of the dramatic narrative and to highlight the play's themes. By contrast, in *Travesties*, the playwright incorporates extensive soundscapes using a broad range of aural elements to create a pastiche and a sense of theatricality which suggest to the audience that Stoppard is not, for the most part,

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<sup>66</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, eds, Roger Warren and Stanley Wells, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 127.

<sup>67</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 149.

<sup>68</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Tom Stoppard*, ed., Katherine E. Kelly, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10-11.

attempting realism on stage. In other words, in both plays, whether sparsely or generously used, aural elements can be said to further the creation of the 'unfamiliar dramatic context'.

Both plays, as well as Stoppard's intervening theatre play *Jumpers*, can be said to share a common bond, deeply rooted as they are in a style of performance literature known as the Theatre of the Absurd. The term 'Theatre of the Absurd' was coined by the critic Martin Esslin to describe performance literature 'devoid of the traditional attractions of the well-made drama'<sup>69</sup> whereby characters exist in a world without apparent meaning. Esslin also states that although the 'element of language still plays an important part... what *happens* on the stage transcends and often contradicts, the *words* spoken by the characters.'<sup>70</sup> Further to this, Noorbakhsh Hooti and Samaneh Shooshtarian have argued that Stoppard's plays contain 'the elements of pastiche, irony, parody, word games, vaudeville, burlesque, self-reflexivity and absence of a frame of reference', a claim which can be said to be particularly true of his earlier works.<sup>71</sup> Other traits associated with Absurdist performance literature include under-developed, one-dimensional, puppet-like characters, often trapped in incomprehensible situations beyond their control. This promotes a sense of the created stage scenarios not reflecting or representing recognizable realities to the audience. Richard Corballis states that Stoppard creates a scenario with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* which is 'inside out... Thus the exits marked for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet* become exits for the other characters in Stoppard.'<sup>72</sup> This scenario is supported in Stoppard's character, the Player. When Rosencrantz asks him: 'I mean, what exactly do you *do*?' the Player replies: 'We do on stage the things that are supposed to happen off.'<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, these transitions between the 'real' world of the protagonists and the 'intruding' world of *Hamlet* are often signalled by aural effects performed by the Player and his troupe, and one can suggest that the sound of the recorder becomes more ominous with each hearing, signalling as it does the increasing control the Tragedians and the world of *Hamlet* are able to exert over Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The Absurdist incomprehensible situation also has special focus in *Travesties*, in which the playwright diminishes meaning by disabling significant or complete segments of the characters' language, by presenting them in clichés, chant or song and dance routines. At several telling points in the narrative Stoppard diminishes the verisimilitude of his characters

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<sup>69</sup> Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd., 2001), 28.

<sup>70</sup> Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 26.

<sup>71</sup> Noorbakhsh Hooti and Samaneh Shooshtarian, 'A Postmodernist Reading of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*', *Studies in Literature and Language* 2.1 (2011), 147-162; 148..

<sup>72</sup> Richard Corballis, 'Extending the Audience: The Structure of "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead"', *ARIEL* 11.2 (1980) 65-79; 66.

<sup>73</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 28.



by having them produce repetitious nonsensical speech, which, at its most basic, is reduced to non-semantic, rhythmic sound, suggesting musical tones rather than words.

Both of the 'worlds' in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Travesties* are known to Stoppard's audiences. The main difference, however, is that his first play spans a paradoxical divide, between an intruding exterior space that is Shakespeare's fictional play *Hamlet* and a world in which, Corballis argues, the protagonists are an extension of the audience: 'ROS: I feel like a spectator' (41). On the other hand, the latter is a fiction created from the questionable memories of one character's mind and, yet, features characters based on people who did, indeed, live in Zurich in 1917. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Stoppard relies on the overarching narrative structure of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and borrows extensive passages from that text in order to inform the audience of necessary intertextual references. Although many of the main characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* enliven the action in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, it is the selection of two of the play's minor characters, and the Players from *Hamlet*, which promises new perspectives. In particular, Stoppard focuses on an allusion to the playing of a recorder, in which the Prince of Denmark accuses his friend Guildenstern of taking him for a fool. In using this simile again in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and by emphasizing it, Stoppard highlights this one particular exchange as a way of expanding upon the theme of betrayal, using both referential speech and the on-going use of a particular aural element throughout the play - the sound of a recorder being played.

By contrast, in *Travesties*, the playwright has free rein to create imagined interactions between real-life people who, for the most part, did not actually meet. The intertextual aural references are also much more extensive in *Travesties*, and Stoppard's inclusion of numerous, varied aural elements creates and sustains a pastiche effect as the characters, trapped within the confused narrative of Old Carr's mind and his rambling reminiscences, are presented as travesties of their historical selves. This effect has its beginning in the opening scene of the play, where Stoppard immediately establishes a sense of artifice through the use of nonsensical and rhythmic speech sounds. What the audience is encouraged to realize is that each character represents fragmented memories, mirrored by the fragmented sound. Unlike the less-defined setting of Stoppard's first play, a recognizable library setting in *Travesties* is immediately established. The text, however, still pays homage to the Theatre of the Absurd by having any meaningful communication between the play's characters and the audience waylaid by the rhythmic enunciations of Joyce and Tzara, by Gwen's quizzical repetitions of

Joyce's dictation and by an occasional, punctuating 'Ssssssh!' from Cecily. A little later, Lenin is implicated as his 'Da-da' responses to Nadya's news identify him, albeit at a distance, with Tzara's Dadaism.<sup>74</sup> In addition, the early reminiscences of Old Carr in *Travesties* involve a series of elliptical yet contradictory speeches which further create a sense of incomprehensibility. To those listening, Stoppard is signalling that any communication is not to be taken at face value. In addition, subsequent speech rhythms, limericks, burlesques, and most of the music in the play lend it an air of an entertaining rigmarole as opposed to a more serious, traditional, expositional performance narrative. However, the latter is not sacrificed, and a move away from a more Absurdist style of theatre towards more realist characterizations will be demonstrated in the analysis of Stoppard's use of Beethoven's *Appassionata* and the near-verbatim use of Lenin's and Nadezhda Krupskaya's own texts.

### **1.3 *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead***

In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Stoppard's sparse use of aural elements is, for the most part, confined to the very occasional yet significant use of instrumental music. The exceptions to these instances are the inclusions of sound effects and off-stage voices in the third act to create a soundscape indicating a sea-crossing on board a boat.

There are several instruments in the play. When the Players make their first entrance, Stoppard lists them as 'a DRUMMER, a HORN-PLAYER and a FLAUTIST' (21) and, in addition, 'a lute is heard' and 'more instruments join in' from the barrels holding the musicians in the third act. However, it is the recorder, carrying the melody, which will come to haunt the play's protagonists and add to their sense of an 'inescapable' fate, signified by the playing of 'a familiar tune which has been heard three times before' (113). In the text, Stoppard maintains a historic confusion for modern-day readers by using interchangeable terms common in Shakespeare's time. In addition to references to a 'recorder', he has his characters refer to it as a 'pipe', the common name for all manner of wind instruments. Another synonym is 'flute', hence his inclusion of the title 'flautist'. However, this does not refer to a player of the traverse flute, which was invented well after Shakespeare's time; it refers to the player of a recorder, which belongs to the family of woodwind instruments known as fipple flutes. This analysis, unless citing other texts, will use of the word 'recorder'.

The foregrounding of the recorder is not to be underestimated. Because of the instrument's longevity, the sounds it produces create an unbroken link to the Elizabethan period. This direct aural reference strengthens the audience's pre-knowledge of *Hamlet*, as do

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<sup>74</sup> Stoppard, *Travesties*, 17-20.

Stoppard's stage directions at the start of Act Three. Here, his use of a nautical soundscape, not only brings with it associations to Hamlet's famous line 'a sea of troubles' but to the immense range of nautical references and situations for which Shakespeare is known.

### 1.3.1 Sound as a narrative device

There is a sense that much, if not most, of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is an inversion and that the protagonists are players waiting in the wings. It is also possible to suggest that this play can be interpreted as Stoppard exploring the theatre and its conventions through the evolving trials and tribulations of his main characters, and that the aural elements are incorporated to demonstrate a meta-theatrical structural effect in which sound signifies impending action. Stoppard strengthens this idea of the play as a commentary on theatre practices by the defining shifts in the play's evolution being heralded by music and by association with those playing it: the Tragedians. Early in the play, Stoppard has the protagonists inhabit 'a place without any visible character' (11): a place which, arguably, gains theatrical dimensions upon the Tragedians arrival. Indeed, after their first encounter with the Tragedians, they are first mistaken for 'An audience!' (21). However, soon after, they are recognized as 'fellow artists' (23). As meta-theatrical pawns, Robert Egan observes that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern progress 'from word-association to dialogue to dramatic mimesis' and 'explore progressively more sophisticated modes of play'.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, the protagonists, through their encounters with the Tragedians, and via carefully selected verbatim extracts from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, help the audience to a more critical awareness of the mechanisms underlying the art of performance. In addition, Stoppard has them directly address, and comment on, the audience, and they beat a regular retreat to the front of the stage. Later, even though they are subsumed intermittently in the verbatim extracts from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, wherever possible, Stoppard has them maintain a distance in their encounters with the prince of Denmark and to act as commentators on his actions. Furthermore, they comment on the play's structure: 'We are entitled to some direction' (20) and critique their own roles in terms of their performance, such as when they lose miserably in a rhetorical parry with Hamlet: 'ROS: I think we can say he made us look ridiculous....Twenty-seven questions he got in in ten minutes, and answered three.' (56-57).

The lack of any identifying soundscape at the start of Act One is in keeping with the Absurdist style, allowing Stoppard to create an obscurely-defined sense of place, and, in the

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<sup>75</sup> Robert Egan, 'A Thin Beam of Light: The Purpose of Playing in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*', *Theatre Journal* 31.1 (1979), 59-69; 63.

beginning, passive, puppet-like characters unsure as to their place in the scheme of things. Only the intertextual referencing of the characters' names in the play's title give any indication that this is a place which exists, both exterior to and within Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The characters are engaged in the repetitive activity of an immensely improbable coin-tossing at the beginning of the first act which leads to Guildenstern's philosophical wondering.

What becomes particularly significant as the play progresses is how the character of Guildenstern becomes more and more aware of the intimate relationship between narrative action and the playwright's inclusion of aural effects, and extends his character's 'awareness' to hint at the meta-narrative. He comes to realize that the sound of music not only foreshadows action, but that there is a play beyond their reality in which they are destined to take part. On the one hand, Rosencrantz can be said to have a more physical response and represents the less intellectual, less inquisitive of the two. And although the two characters struggle to maintain separate identities throughout the play (both to other characters and with each other), it remains a trait of Guildenstern to comprehend and quell his rising panic, while Rosencrantz '*betrays no surprise at all*' (11), and does not fully appreciate their situation.

When Stoppard does introduce the sense of 'something about to happen', it is linked to music, a narrative device which Stoppard enlists throughout the play, by heralding action with aural elements based on the instrumental music of the recorder or the Tragedians' band. The first inklings of Guildenstern's awareness of the narrative occur when he begins to recollect events beyond the existential space of their implausible coin-tossing: 'a messenger arrived. We had been sent for.' (18). Having just delivered a long speech about 'the scientific approach to the examination of phenomena' as a 'defence against the pure emotion of fear' (17-18), Guildenstern associates the only narrative 'action' thus far – 'a messenger arrived' to the possibility of imminent action because 'for the last three minutes on the wind of a windless day I have heard the sound of drums and flute...' (18). This idea of narrative progress, absent until now, is expressed in his claim that the 'sound' is imminent. Without wind the instruments cannot be far away. In short, the previous mention of 'a messenger' and 'the sound of drums and flute' emphasize the idea of music and narrative action and create the association between music and action.

However, Stoppard does not introduce these instruments just yet, but allows Guildenstern to reveal the forgotten narrative. It is only when the recollections are regrouped more solidly and with Guildenstern demanding that they 'are entitled to some direction' (20) that the music is made imminent for the second time, this time by Rosencrantz:

ROS (*alert, listening*): I say—! I say—

GUIL: Yes?

ROS: I can hear——thought I heard——music.

GUIL *raises himself*

GUIL: Yes?

ROS: Like a band...It sounded like—a band. Drums.

GUIL: Yes.

ROS (relaxes): It couldn't have been real

...

ROS (*at edge of stage*): It must have been thunder. Like drums . . . (20-21)

The emotionality of the characters is heightened through stage directions, given to Rosencrantz, in addition to his text, and in the simple repetition of Guildenstern's use of 'yes': first questioning and then declarative, which suggest the significance of the music and add to a sense of imminent action after the extensive philosophical prelude. The particular textual association to 'thunder' and 'drums' suggest to the audience that what is about to transpire fits with their expectations of characters from a Shakespearean tragedy play.

Stoppard allows the character's awareness of the music to precede the audience's experience. The spoken references, therefore, while delaying the audience's experience of the music, create a sense of anticipation because of the otherwise silent aural backdrop. Both characters sense that the music is imminent and, contrary to their earlier more passive existence, their conversation suggests greater emotional engagement. By delaying the audience's reception of the instrumental sound, Stoppard is teasing out their perceptive expectations. This delay creates suspense and further emphasizes the significance of the music. From the first moment the music is heard until the end of the play, music will suggest the idea of a fateful encounter.

In the stage directions, unbeknownst to the audience, Stoppard writes: '*By the end of the next speech, the band is faintly audible*' (20-21). Therefore, before the audience hears any music, Stoppard has Guildenstern intellectualize about unicorns and the idea of 'mystical encounters', in stark contrast to the Rosencrantz's growing sense of something 'real' being about to happen. As the audience shares in the aural emergence of the music, Rosencrantz states: '*(eagerly)* I knew all along it was a band.' (21) The fear of not knowing has been happily replaced by an aural entity, made all the more real by the appearance of the Players on stage.

The association created by Stoppard between the suggestion of imminent action and music is, arguably, so strong that, once established, no music need actually be heard by the audience for them to anticipate a change in the dynamics of the narrative. In short, verbal reference to music alone by either of the two main characters becomes enough to signal impending action. One instance occurs prior to their inclusion in the *Hamlet* play at the end of the first act. Without any aural effect, the following exchange signals Hamlet's arrival:

ROS (*alert, ear cocked*) I say! I heard music —

GUIL We're here.

ROS — Like a band — I thought I heard a band. (51)

Guildestern's matter-of-fact response seems to express his comprehension of the inevitability associated with this device: music, of course, signals that the time has come for them to 'go on' in their assigned roles. It occurs just prior to Stoppard's two characters being once again immersed in the narrative action of *Hamlet* and ends the first act with the promise of further narrative progression.

Not all the aural elements are anticipated by the main characters. At the sudden dishevelled appearance of Hamlet and Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are frozen with surprise and do not know how to 'act'. Therefore, Stoppard uses a musical 'flourish' to break the spell and signal the narrative segue from his own text into that of *Hamlet*: the characters' intertextual slide into the Elsinore of Shakespeare (35). For the most part, however, Stoppard has the character Guildenstern develop a growing awareness of the theatrical world of which he is a part, and a particular convention: music as a theatrical device may herald imminent narrative action. By allowing his character this awareness, Stoppard creates a sense of existential confusion by dismantling what Hooti and Shooshtarian refer to as 'conventional norms of character, dialogue and narrative.'<sup>76</sup>

The action, in the first instance, is the entrance and introduction of the Tragedians, and their music: music which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern will continue to hear at action-heralding moments occur throughout the play. In addition to the aforementioned arrival of the Players, Stoppard starts the second act with a 'flourish from the TRAGEDIANS' (55). The 'flourish' and Guildenstern's observation: 'There are the players' (55) are both lifted directly from *Hamlet*. However, in Stoppard's play, the inclusion of Guildenstern's line can also be interpreted as another example of Stoppard showing his protagonist to be aware that the Players' music heralds imminent narrative progress. Already, at the end of Act One, when

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<sup>76</sup> Hooti and Shooshtarian, 'A Postmodernist Reading', 147.

Rosencrantz exclaims: ‘I say! I heard music —’, Guildenstern’s reply: ‘We’re here’ (51) seems resigned and a matter-of-fact, as if it is a given that being in Elsinore means events beyond their control and, therefore, music to herald the fact. Towards the end of the second act, even Rosencrantz has gained enough awareness to recognize the narrative power of the music; he has come to understand the significance of the players and the instruments. Understanding that he will continue to be involved in Hamlet’s fate, led on, as it were, by the music, Rosencrantz’s reactions to the music become more despairing:

ROS *puts up his head listening.*

ROS There it is again. (*In anguish.*) All I ask is a change of ground! (93)

Soon after, just prior to rejoining Hamlet to embark for England, Stoppard allows the audience to share in Rosencrantz’s aural understanding:

ROS (*head up, listening*) : I got it again then.

*They listen – the faintest sound of TRAGEDIANS’ band* (94)

The exploration of sound as a theatrical device is continued in the third act. Just as in the first act, when soundscapes are first introduced, a sense of evolving narrative is created at the start of Act Three, where the playwright introduces an expansive selection of aural effects to establish the sense of place and movement. The stage directions state: ‘*Opens in pitch darkness. Soft sea sounds*’ and, after Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s first dialogue, ‘*the sound builds and identifies itself – the sea. Ship timbers, wind in the rigging, and then shouts of sailors calling obscure but inescapably nautical instructions*’ (98). For all those in the audience familiar with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s fate in *Hamlet*, Stoppard induces anything but a sense of freedom by adding the sound of the ocean, bringing, as it does, the associations of destination England and the beheading of these two characters. What Stoppard maintains with the creation of this aural seascape is what Laura Scuriatti, for example, observes in her discussion of the way in which Shakespeare uses nautical metaphors: ‘the sea is the force which human beings have to contend with in order to save their lives. The age-old metaphor of life as a sea-voyage.’<sup>77</sup> However, in contrast to the roaring oceans of plays like *The Tempest*, Stoppard’s sea sounds are slight and all the more ominous for being so. What they allow for is the audience’s sense of place to be moved beyond Elsinore and for them to understand the futility of Guildenstern’s stuttering sense of liberation: a futility the character,

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<sup>77</sup> Laura Scuriatti, ‘Sea changes: the Sea, Art and Storytelling in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Isak Dinesen’s *Tempests* and Marina Warner’s *Indigo*.’ *Civiltà del mare e navigazioni interculturali: sponde d’Europa e l’“isola” Trieste*, eds, C. Ferrini, R. Geffer Wondrich, P. Quazzolo, A. Zoppellari. Trieste: EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2012. 90-106; 92.

too, comes to acknowledge. Demonstrating this character's fully-fledged awareness of music as a theatrical narrative device, Stoppard has him comment: 'the players will hold their positions until the music starts' (100-101).

When Guildenstern does hear the music, on board, both he and Rosencrantz brace for action:

*The muffled sound of a recorder. They sit up with disproportionate interest.*

GUIL: Here we go

ROS: Yes, but what?

*They listen to the music* (112)

Here, Rosencrantz's 'Yes' displays his full comprehension and acceptance of the musical cue as a call to action. And Stoppard has Guildenstern, once more, recognize an aural element as a call to action: '...finally, a sound; ... giving rise at once to the speculation or the assumption or the hope that something is about to happen; a pipe is heard.' (112). Then, with ever the entertainer's eye for a good physical theatre routine, Stoppard has Rosencrantz hunt out the source of the music, with his character both aware and afraid of the implications:

*He stands gazing at the middle barrel. The pipe plays on within. He kicks the barrel. The pipe stops. He leaps backwards towards GUIL. The pipe starts up again. He approaches the barrel cautiously. He lifts the lid. The music is louder. He slams down the lid. The music is softer. He goes back towards GUIL. But a drum starts, muffled. He freezes. He turns....The drumming goes on within, in time to the flute... He opens his mouth to speak....A lute is heard....More instruments join in. Until it is quite inescapable that inside the three barrels, distributed, playing together a familiar tune which has been heard three times before, are the TRAGEDIANS.* (113)

Stoppard is clear that this music is a motif: 'a familiar tune...heard three times before', and that with it, and those playing it, comes decisive action, regardless of the wishes of his main characters.

### 1.3.2 Music as a thematic device

In addition to being used to comment on meta-theatrical conventions, it is also possible to speak of aural elements as a thematic device in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, as, throughout the play, they signal the interwoven themes of destiny and betrayal. Hand in hand with the theatrical premise of music denoting imminent action, Stoppard can be said to use the sound of the Tragedians' instruments to express the idea of a predetermined destiny: decisive



events the protagonists cannot avoid. The recorder, in particular, performs as a metaphor for destiny, directly relating the two protagonists to such fateful observations by Hamlet as:

And blest are those  
Whose blood and judgement are well co-meddled  
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please.<sup>78</sup>

As the instrumental music from the Tragedians becomes more evidently associated to the interventions of the action from *Hamlet* and its tragic ending, so, too, increases Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's despair at each incidence of the playing of the recorder.

From the opening moments of the play, Stoppard presents the audience with the concepts of luck, destiny and design with the two main characters playing what looks like a game of chance. In an otherwise soundless space, the clinking of the landing coin creates no suspense; the result seems, indubitably, to be 'heads'. By thwarting the idea chance, Stoppard creates an existential space in which the regular rules seem not to apply. The audience suspects that Stoppard's two characters have pre-destined roles, and there is an expectation that they will follow the course of their namesakes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The lack of aural elements for most of this first scene, therefore, increases the audience's sense of the protagonists as waiting in the wings for something to happen. As the recollections begin to form, the soundlessness gives way to music reminiscent of Shakespeare's time and, subsequently, the Players hove into view. And, with this troupe comes a sense of the inevitable: of the two friends being drawn into something over which they have no control.

The first time the Tragedians' music is heard in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is in the wake of Guildenstern's vague memories of being summoned to Elsinore. He and Rosencrantz have been sent for by the king. Without any further information to act upon, but with a gathering sense of the necessity to react in some way 'the approaching music of the Tragedians seems to promise relief from their predicament.'<sup>79</sup> Therefore, suggests Egan, the idea of someone giving them a lead, is, at first, seen by the two friends as a positive. When Guildenstern suggests that it was 'Fate, then' which caused them to meet, the Player replies: 'Oh yes. We have no control. ...' (25), thus confirming the idea of the characters' inability to change events. Just how little control Guildenstern has becomes evident when he tries and fails to convince the Player that he has 'influence' (26). Slowly it dawns on him that his, too,

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<sup>78</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.2.64 – 67.

<sup>79</sup> Egan, 'A Thin Beam of Light', 61.

is a predetermined state, and, as a player, he is excluded from exerting any power to influence the outcome of the play. Realizing his impotence at the Player's indifference, Guildenstern experiences this first glimmer of understanding: 'You said something — about getting caught up in the action' (26).

Furthermore, Egan writes: 'traveling in a random direction toward an unknown goal, the Tragedians play out the roles predetermined for them by the gory melodramas of their repertoire.' and, furthermore, that the audience senses 'a metaphor here for the plight of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, soon to enact the parts dictated to them by Shakespeare's script.'<sup>80</sup> What soon becomes apparent, however, is that the fate of the Tragedians, or, at the very least, that of the Player, may be more under the latter's control than he suggests. Stoppard uses recorder music to introduce the Tragedians and, most often, their music also acts as a means to activate the portal into the predetermined narrative insisted upon by *Hamlet*. There is also an increasing sense of intent when the time comes to 'act'. The Player strikes a pose. In doing so, his foot covers the final coin flipped by Guildenstern. When the Player then moves into action with his Tragedians, Rosencrantz finds that, for once, possibly while beneath the Player's shoe, the coin has turned up 'tails'. It is as though, through their arrival and intervention into Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's world, the Player and the Tragedians create the impetus that propels the protagonists along their destined path. The lighting changes, Hamlet and Ophelia appear and, although frozen in shock, the two friends begin to act out their predetermined roles, at the sound of a musical 'flourish' (35).

Egan argues that such moments in Stoppard's play come to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern 'as a visitation of terror; for they have no assurance that the grand scenario in which they are caught up has anything to do with their desires or welfare'<sup>81</sup> The intrusive and seemingly decisive nature of aural elements becomes indicative of how these increasingly fateful shifts evolve from the more positive initial reception into a more ominous promise as the play progresses. As Guildenstern observes: 'Wheels have been set in motion, and they have their own pace, to which we are ... condemned. Each move is dictated by the previous one' (60). The Tragedians confirm their presence as representatives of human destiny and an inevitable end: 'It never varies — we aim at the point where everyone who is marked for death dies. . . . It is *written*. We follow directions — there is no choice involved' (79-80). Not one to miss a prime opportunity to paraphrase another playwright, Stoppard also reconfigures

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<sup>80</sup> Egan, 'A Thin Beam of Light', 61.

<sup>81</sup> Egan, 'A Thin Beam of Light', 60.

Miss Prism's judgment from Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*: 'The good end happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.'<sup>82</sup> Stoppard's Player, instead, declares: 'The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily. That is what tragedy means' (80).

In terms of one's destiny and the amount of control one has over it, Christopher Nassaar believes that 'Stoppard offers a fairly sophisticated resolution to this age-old problem. His view, in the play, is that human life is basically predetermined because, even though humans do have choices in this life, they do not have enough information to choose intelligently.'<sup>83</sup> As Guildenstern states, late in the play: 'We act on scraps of information [...] sifting half-remembered directions that we can hardly separate from instinct' (102). Yet, there is also a moment within the play where Rosencrantz and Guildenstern seem to be offered the opportunity to save Hamlet but choose inaction, though one can argue that, had they chosen otherwise and changed the course of the play, they would cease to be the characters Shakespeare intended them to be. What Stoppard offers the audience at this point is a direct thematic link. Having seen the two characters 'chose' inaction, fate is signaled by the sound of the 'muffled' recorder (112).

The other significant aural example underscoring destiny as a theme in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is Stoppard's inclusion of a seascape at the start of the third act: 'soft sea sounds' and '...the sound builds a little and identifies itself — the sea. Ship timbers, wind in the rigging, and then shouts of sailors...' (97-98). This soundscape helps Stoppard create the type of narrative space often associated with destiny. As Scuriatti observes, in literature, 'the presence of the sea, ... often figures as a veritable arbiter of human destinies, or as a quasi-divine force as in Biblical and mythological traditions, where human beings must confront themselves in order to survive, or against which they must test their moral claims, their desires, emotions and feelings.'<sup>84</sup>

As Philip Edwards notes, in Shakespeare, and particularly in *Macbeth*: 'Navigation has to do with the extent of one's personal power to reach a destination, and the extent of supernatural power, good or bad (including of course Fortune) to help or hamper one's efforts.'<sup>85</sup> Audiences familiar with *Hamlet* understand that the predetermined narrative has progressed to the boat carrying the three characters to England. The sounds of the boat imply

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<sup>82</sup> Oscar Wilde, 'The Importance of Being Earnest' in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Vol. 2, ed. Julia Reidhead (New York and London: W.H. Norton, 2006), 1699-1740; 1715.

<sup>83</sup> Christopher S. Nassaar. Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. *Explicator* 58.2 (2000), 91-92.

<sup>84</sup> Scuriatti, 'Sea Changes', 90.

<sup>85</sup> Philip Edwards, *Sea-mark: The Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 4.

that the two protagonists are about to meet their fate. But Stoppard's effects are not the storm effects of *King Lear* or the 'roaring' seas of *The Tempest*. Instead, his 'soft sea sounds' effectively re-establish a sense of limbo lapping at ship's timbers, and, as sound effects go, one might suggest that they are most appropriate as a device with which to lull the audience into repose, rather than suggesting to them to expect action. What Stoppard creates, prior to the sounding of the recorder, is an expository soundscape.

Stoppard has Guildenstern acknowledge the limitations and extent of this 'personal power': 'One is free on a boat. For a time. Relatively' (101). It is on board the boat that the two friends are given the opportunity, on reading the letter, to be 'free' and to make a difference: to warn Hamlet of its contents. It is the moment when there 'escapes a thin beam of light that, seen at the right angle, can crack the shell of mortality' (83) but, which Guildenstern rejects as a chance to act independently of his fate as a character from *Hamlet*.

Compared to the seemingly innocuous 'soft sea sounds', the re-emergence of the Tragedian's musical motif is ominous, suggesting as it does the intrusion of fate as proscribed by *Hamlet*. Stoppard also has Guildenstern highlight this contrast, describing their previous state as 'the void' encapsulated by 'the perfect and absolute silence of the wet lazy slap of water against water and the rolling creak of time' (112). This comment is reminiscent of Guildenstern's earlier remark preceding the initial arrival of the Tragedians: 'for the last three minutes on the wind of a windless day' (18). The 'absolute silence' of a slapping sound, like the concept of a windless wind, is an absurdity which defies the seascape sound effect. What Stoppard does, however, is reaffirm the contrast between the existential idea of silence and the protagonists' limbo-like state at the opening of the play and the audience's expectation of a fateful aural intervention. Then, as now, the arrival of the recorder after the 'silence', signals that their freedom is short-lived, tied as their destinies are to perform to the music.

Interwoven with the theme of destiny in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is that of betrayal. Stoppard's aural seascape carries associations with betrayal as it is on board the boat that the protagonists do not act upon the information garnered from opening Claudius' letter, reseal the letter, and, thus, betray Hamlet. Yet, more significantly, it is the aural cues of the recorder throughout the play which best express the themes of perfidy and betrayal on a variety of levels.

Those in Stoppard's audiences familiar with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* may well anticipate the role of the recorder in expanding on the theme of betrayal. Therefore, the music from, and any allusions to, the recorder which Stoppard makes, directly or otherwise, carry

clear intertextual links to the theme of betrayal established by Shakespeare over three and a half centuries earlier. In *Hamlet*, the prince confronts Guildenstern with a recorder and accuses him of attempting to trick him. After Shakespeare's play-within-a play, when the King has called for lights and exited, the Players enter 'with recorders' and the prince exclaims: 'A ha! Come, some music! Come, the recorders!',<sup>86</sup> delighted at his successful effect to confront his uncle's treachery. Despite Hamlet's demands that he play, Guildenstern insists as to his ignorance of the instrument, and, therefore, his lack of treachery:

Guildenstern But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

Hamlet Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me.<sup>87</sup>

It is the turning point at which Shakespeare's audience understands that Hamlet knows Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to be in league with Claudius and Gertrude, and that they are willing to betray him. As such, the playing of the recorder becomes an unmistakable analogy for betrayal: one which is not lost on Stoppard's audience. When, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Stoppard has the players perform the betrayal of Hamlet's father, by performing the *Murder of Gonzago*, he does not introduce it with a trumpet, as Shakespeare does in *Hamlet*. Instead, Stoppard maintains the association of perfidy and pipe by introducing the mime with '*Soft music from a recorder*' to accompany the deathly betrayal of the Player-king by his Player-queen (77).

Stoppard further extends this association in Act Three in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are on the boat bound for England carrying the letter demanding Hamlet's execution. In the night, the audience sees Hamlet, lit by moonlight, betray his friends, by stealing the letter that commands his death, from Guildenstern, and replacing it with another letter, ordering their deaths. With the sound of the recorder soon after, the association with

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<sup>86</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.2.283 – 84.

<sup>87</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.2.353 – 63.

betrayal is strengthened, all the more so when the audience see Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ‘*sit up with disproportionate interest*’ and ‘*listen to the music*’ (112). Stoppard ties the pipe-playing directly to the theme by also having Guildenstern closely, though unwittingly, paraphrase the most accusatory part of Hamlet’s ‘recorder’ speech:

Hamlet            It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.<sup>88</sup>

By comparison, Stoppard has Guildenstern, haltingly, observe:

One of the sailors has pursed his lips against a woodwind, his fingers and thumb governing, shall we say, the ventages, whereupon, giving it breath, let us say, with his mouth, it, the pipe, discourses, as the saying goes, most eloquent music. A thing like that, it could change the course of events.’ (112).

Just as the pipe has signaled narrative shifts earlier in the play, the ‘course of events’ must, once again, ‘change’ because of the ‘most eloquent music’. With the music and the inter-textual references so close upon the visual evidence of Hamlet’s betrayal, it is suggesting that it is he who is the better pipe-player, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who are betrayed: condemned to death upon arrival in England.

The sense of fear upon hearing the recorder and other instruments on board the boat is cemented through Stoppard’s stage directions for Rosencrantz and his intensely physical reactions to the assembled barrels, from which music is emanating: *He leaps backwards... He approaches...cautiously...He slams down the lid. He freezes. He turns...He opens his mouth to speak...He spins around*’ (113). The implication of the music and the Tragedians arriving at this point in Stoppard’s play is not lost upon an attentive audience: the Players and their music serve to alert the audience to the themes of manipulation and betrayal. The recorder melody motif, underscored by the rest of the band, comes in the immediate wake of the two main characters having betrayed Hamlet and then, in turn, being betrayed by him.

The final aural effect in the play is also the final stage direction. Upon a stage littered with bodies – ‘*the tableau of court and corpses which is the last scene of Hamlet*’, the Ambassador and Horatio deliver speeches and ‘*the play fades out, overtaken by dark and music*’ (126). Stoppard does not specify the music used to end the play but, linked as closely as they are with tragedy and ‘blood’, it would seem fitting for the final element in the play to be the strains of the Tragedians’ band.

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<sup>88</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.2.349 – 52.

#### 1.4 *Travesties*

So far, I have discussed a variety of ways in which Stoppard makes use of aural elements in his first play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, including his use of particular instruments which carry historical and theatrical associations to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. I have also shown that sound is introduced by the author at significant narrative junctures to delineate the play's structure and to create suspense. Furthermore, I have demonstrated how Stoppard's particular focus on the instrument of the recorder is used in multiple ways to underscore the themes of fate and betrayal. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will examine how, as a recognized playwright, Stoppard's expands his inclusion of aural elements in his third play, *Travesties*, to develop a pervading sense of artifice with the exception of the realistic portrayal of the Lenins.

As early as 1960, as a Bristol-based journalist writing film and theatre reviews, Stoppard admired the juxtaposition of 'entertainment and education' in Richard Attenborough's film *The Angry Silence*. In his review of the film, Stoppard likened this combination to 'a row of chorus girls explaining Einstein's theory of light.'<sup>89</sup> Even from his early days, then, Stoppard has appreciated the juxtaposition of song and dance with less flamboyant intellectual pursuit.

In Stoppard's play *Travesties*, first performed in 1974, this divide between 'entertainment and education' can also be found, and it is made more apparent by the choices of the aural elements which the playwright specifies in the text, as well as the contrastive and significant ways in which he uses them. Primarily, Stoppard has aural elements assist in the creation of an overall sense of artifice before moving from this stylistic contrivance to create the less one-dimensional and, therefore, more realistic characters of Nadya and Lenin.

*Travesties* is constructed around Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and Stoppard toyed with the idea, early on, of calling the play *Prism*, alluding 'both to Wilde's character Miss Prism and to the play's prismatic treatment of history, art and revolution' through the 'triangular prism of Joyce-Tzara-and-Lenin', who themselves are refracted 'through Carr's memory, and again through Stoppard's multifaceted parody.'<sup>90</sup> Stoppard's 'parody' of the characters in *Travesties* is, Nevin Yildirim Koyuncu writes: 'raising or generating significant questions as to the nature of art and its production, the function of art, linguistic ambiguity, meaning and memory, the unsettled debate between fact and fiction, and

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<sup>89</sup> Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 395.

<sup>90</sup> John Fleming, *Stoppard's Theatre: Finding Order amid Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 106.

life and art' and that, the play, through 'an ironic prism... tries to touch upon and illuminate these issues by also parodying them.'<sup>91</sup>

Many of the techniques Stoppard exploits to 'illuminate these issues' are aural. By using often exaggerated soundscapes to stylistically represent characters, the playwright strips them of realism and they become cyphers within the play's overall lightheartedness. In contrast, when the more serious thematic tones surface in the anti-art polemic of Lenin's speeches, Stoppard uses the more substantial aural element of classical music to flesh out the characters of Nadya and Lenin.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, I propose that the pastiche effect in *Travesties*, bolstered by a variety of popular songs, chants, rhythmical dialogues and sound effects, subsides when dealing with the characters of Lenin and Nadya, as Stoppard allows them to inhabit a less-fictional and more emotionally real space, effectively strengthened by his use of this harmonious Beethoven sonata motif. In other words, while a wide variety of popular music styles and soundscapes create a play which is an entertainment of farcical exchanges and stylistic routines, Stoppard's invocation of Beethoven is more likely to impart other, more emotional reactions from his audience.

I suggest that Stoppard's choice of Beethoven as a motif for Lenin, other than for the prosaic reason that Lenin mentions him in his writing, has to do with Beethoven's reputation as a passionate musical revolutionary. In addition, in wishing to convey the emotional depth of the character Lenin, Stoppard recognizes the intense emotional resonance of Beethoven's piano compositions. As Peter Gutmann writes of the composer's oeuvre: 'his piano sonatas are the most intimate of these, as Beethoven wrote them for his own instrument, and thus they preserve an aural image of the ideal he sought as a performer.'<sup>93</sup> This idea of intimacy matches Stoppard's use of the personal and almost verbatim reminisces of Nadya, her husband Lenin and shared experience in tumultuous time. Contrary to this, Stoppard demands very different aural elements to delineate between the lives of real historical figures and the historical travesties which are the two-dimensional cyphers of Old Carr's memory, associated as they are with aural effects which minimize historical reality and personal identity. Furthermore, Gutmann suggests that Beethoven's piano sonatas do not 'dilute the personal communication between artist and audience. Thus, when we hear a Beethoven piano sonata,

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<sup>91</sup> Nevin Yildirim Koyuncu, 'Re-writing and Mystifying Wilde's 'Art for Art's Sake': Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*.' *Proceedings of the: Knowledge, Creativity and Transformations of Societies (KCTOS) Conference, December 6-9, 2007: Re-written Literatures: Transforming Texts, Transforming Cultures*. n. page.

<sup>92</sup> Stoppard, *Travesties*, 85-88. Unless otherwise stated, all references are to this edition.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Gutmann, <<http://www.classicalnotes.net/classics3/appassionata.html>> 2009: n. page.



we come closer to the man and the artist than with any other genre of his music.’<sup>94</sup> In short, in addition to allowing for a powerful communicative effect for his audience, Stoppard makes thematic associations between his character and music considered revolutionary in its time. By aligning the music to the more historically correct and personalized representations of Lenin and Nadya, Stoppard is also making the real historical link between a piece of music written at an earlier time of unrest and war on the European continent: the war of the Third Coalition, part of the Napoleonic Wars.

Despite this nod to realism in the form of Lenin and Nadya in Act Two, assisted as it is by a more culturally weighty style of music, twentieth century popular music, vocal chants and other sound effects are liberally used by Stoppard to detract from any significant emotional connection being created between the remaining characters in the play and the audience. The ingenuity with which Old Carr’s memory recreates past events is a triumph of style over substance and, throughout *Travesties*, Stoppard uses his dislocation technique and associated aural elements such as sound effects and music to extend the parody. These aid the construction of Old Carr’s engaging whimsical narrative and, because of their often surrealistic context, the audience is soon pondering the reliability of his facts. The structure of the play, constructed as it is around Old Carr’s degenerating memory, is, therefore, unreliable and obviously artificial. Through ample aural and other textual clues the audience becomes well-aware of his cognitive confusion long before Old Cecily finally confirms the complete unreliability of her husband’s memory in the final scene: ‘You never even saw Lenin....And you were never the Consul’ (98). Stoppard does not, however, allow Old Carr’s factual disability to interfere with the telling of a fine tale, and, indeed, adds many a metaphorical bell and whistle to his reminiscences, to ensure the audience is entertained.

Much of *Travesties* is rife with dislocation techniques, which Stoppard seems to use to undermine character development, thereby inhibiting any empathic emotional connection within the audience to the characters on stage. Early on in the play Stoppard signals some of these techniques by having the character of Old Carr make the following observation about the Consular Service: ‘Not a great patron of poetry, the service....I mean you’d never say that a facility for rhyme and metre was the sine qua non of advancement in the Consular Service...’ (21). As well as the aforementioned chanting, the playwright chooses to replace more naturalistic dialogue with other styles of delivery. After Bennett and Carr’s contretemps in Act One, Stoppard re-introduces Tzara: ‘*His entrance might be set to appropriate music*’

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<sup>94</sup> Gutmann, [www.classicalnotes.net](http://www.classicalnotes.net). n.page.

(32). Nadel tells of director Peter Wood's choice of 'the noise of an orchestra (and) the song 'Every Little Breeze Seems to Whisper Louise', an idea of Wood's that absolutely works'<sup>95</sup> in its signal to the audience not to take this '*Rumanian nonsense*' all too seriously (32). Act Two begins with an ideological speech from Cecily and, during her subsequent debate with Carr, Stoppard introduces '*coloured lights (which) begin to play over her body*' and '*Faintly from 1974...the sound of the big band playing "The Stripper"*' (78). Before the music, Cecily is perceived as informed and well-reasoned. The music and lights, however, reduce her to an object of sexual intent in Carr's mind: 'all the time you're talking about classes, you're trying to imagine how I'd look stripped off to my knickers' (78). Furthermore, her political verbal virtuosity is reduced to a litany of less and less comprehensible ideological terms, once again diminishing the earlier, strong political thematic. Finally, towards the end of the play, Stoppard structures one section of the narrative in limerick form, and has another significant, informative part presented in the rhyming style of vaudeville pair Gallagher and Shean.

By having the more strict poetic 'rhythm and metre' undermine any sense of the natural spoken rhythms, the characters speaking the non-naturalistic text can be understood as being travesties of otherwise realistic characters with whom the audience might emotionally identify. What the examples above have in common is the sense that Stoppard is reducing the validity of any meanings inherent in these sections of the spoken text. He does this by presenting the information necessary to the development of the plot within aural forms of entertainment which have been historically identified with less socially-elevated forms of the performing arts. The importance of the other characters' ideologies can be said to be minimized by the association to more populist cultural references, whereas the political intellect of Lenin is associated with the more socially-celebrated classical music of Beethoven. Carr's shallowness is established early on by his fixation on clothes – Stoppard paying homage to the Wildean ideal of style over substance – and this lack of depth is also made clear when the lengthy sections of the characters (other than Lenin and Nadya) are forced into forms of rhyme and metre reminiscent of playground antics. Stoppard's sidelining of the Lenins with regards the Wildean farce was much commented upon by reviewers and critics after the play's premiere, including Irving Wardle who argued that the play has structural weakness because of 'its complete failure to absorb Lenin'.<sup>96</sup> This exclusion of Lenin and Nadya from the *Earnest*-scheme was rectified somewhat in the 1993 revival

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<sup>95</sup> Nadel, *Double Act*, 246.

<sup>96</sup> Alexander Feldman, *Dramas of the Past on the Twentieth Century Stage: In History's Wings* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 92.



rhythmic punctuation (18-21). Finally, to add to the nonsense, Stoppard has Joyce exit the library *'at a strolling pace, singing...*

JOYCE            If you ever go across the sea to Ireland...  
                      It may be at the closing of the day...  
                      you can sit and watch the moon rise over Claddagh  
                      and watch the sun go down on Galway Bay...(21)

It is only upon the cessation of the noisy, collective endeavours of the characters in the library, and Joyce's exit singing, that a lack of sound introduces Old Carr. Not that this was always the case. In a note in the 1978 edition of *Travesties*, Stoppard expresses the opinion that a musical 'bridge' from the cacophony to Old Carr's soliloquy is 'desirable':

*(...the use of music as a bridge is probably desirable.) (NOTE: In the original production, the room contained a piano which was at different times used by Old Carr, and in this instance Old Carr played (very badly) the tune of Galway Bay while the set was changed... It is possible that CARR has been immobile on stage from the beginning, an old man remembering...)' (21).*

Although the suggestion of a direct musical link between the character Joyce and Old Carr may have been dropped in subsequent productions, even without a musical 'bridge' Joyce's song can be said to introduce the concept of Carr's memory as unreliable. Old Carr's reminiscing supposedly encapsulates the period 1917 to 1920. However, the version of 'Galway Bay' that the character Joyce sings was not written until 1947. Made popular by Bing Crosby, it is the tune most likely to be remembered the Old Carr of 1975, rather than the earlier version '(My Own Dear) Galway Bay' set to the classic Irish folk melody, 'Skibbereen'. This, then, is the first of the aural elements Stoppard includes to allude to the unreliable nature of memory and to undermine the realities of Old Carr's historical narrative. The playwright also introduces the idea of rhythmic dialogue which will reinvigorate much of the Wildean comedy in the second act. With the song fresh in the audience's mind, Carr refers to Joyce: 'He was Irish, of course. Though not actually from Limerick – he was a Dublin man' (21). Joyce *was* from Dublin and the city of Limerick is not on Galway Bay, so the reference, here, can be seen as Stoppard offering a clue to the rhyming nonsense ahead.

In addition to this aural cue, Stoppard clearly explains in the play's directions how *'Old Carr's memory, which is not notably reliable ... drops a scene'*(27) and suggests that when, later in the play, such 'time slips' occur, *'it may be desirable to mark these moments more heavily by using an extraneous sound or a light effect'* (27). His idea is one of adding

symbolism to the concept of the ‘slipping’ clockwork of Carr’s memory and of this symbolism being accentuated by using ‘*the sound of a cuckoo-clock, artificially amplified*’ (27). It seems a particularly appropriate sound which can also allude not only to time but, somewhat disparagingly, to ‘Switzerland: the still centre of the wheel of war’ where Carr’s memory and most of the play is set (27). The idea of ‘the sound of the cuckoo clock’ being ‘amplified’ also demonstrates Stoppard creating a surrealist mechanized soundscape to emphasize the farcical nature of the majority of his characters. In short, the aural elements underscore what Corballis suggests is Stoppard’s creation of ‘another artificial barrier between the audience and the true events of 1918... provided by the celebrated time slips’ and ‘which contrives to make the very setting of the play seem utterly divorced from reality’.<sup>98</sup>

Structurally, Stoppard uses aural effects to parody intellectual debate by framing it within the vagaries of Old Carr’s memory. One example of this Carr and Tzara’s increasingly heated exchange, spurred on by their inability to agree about the roles of art and politics/war. While their argument does build to a dramatic flashpoint, there is no resolution but a rapid degeneration aurally into a collective chant:

CARR	...my dear Tristan you are simply asking me to accept that the word Art means whatever you wish it to mean; but I do not accept it.
TZARA	Why not? You do exactly the same thing with words like <i>patriotism</i> ....
CARR	...
TZARA	...— and honour — all the traditional sophistries for waging wars of expansion and self-interest, presented to the people in the guise of rational argument set to patriotic hymns... Music is corrupted, language conscripted. Words are taken to stand for opposite facts, opposite ideas... (39)

At the end of this extensive and increasingly vitriolic exchange, Tzara, recalling the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo ‘*slaps his hands sharply together like a gunshot*’. The sound signals the dramatic peak but there is an immediate shift from the moment and the intensity of the preceding climactic build gives way to Carr chanting a First World War tune:

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<sup>98</sup> Richard Corballis, ‘Critical Views on *Travesties*: Richard Corballis on the Role of Memory’ in *Tom Stoppard* ed. Harold Bloom. (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 76.

CARR (quietly): We're here because we're here... because we're here because we're here... we're here because we're here because we're here because we're here...

The political disagreement between the two men, therefore, can be said to end with the 'gunshot' of Tzara's hands. The thematic exposition of the value of art is 'corrupted' as Stoppard reduces the preceding complex language of ideological debate degenerates into a simplistic repetitious chant: '*CARR has dropped into the familiar chant, quite quiet*' and Stoppard has Tzara join in '*just using the sound "da-da" to the same tune*' (40). The seriousness of their political differences is diffused as the music intervenes and Stoppard uses the combined voices to build tension once more, additionally assisted by lighting: '*The light starts to go. The chant grows*'. When Carr is no longer chanting lyrics and '*starts to speak, Tzara continues the chanting quietly for a few more moments*' (41). Now that Carr has ceased to sing the war-time lyrics, one possible effect of the sung "da-da" is to allow the tune of *Auld Lang Syne* to become more noticeable. With the use of the tune *Auld Lang Syne*, Stoppard points clearly to the concepts of memory and reminiscence. In tandem with the lighting shift, Stoppard allows a '*few more moments*' before Carr says: 'Great days!' (41) and the preceding debate between the two men is no longer an historical reality but understood to be another construction of Carr's unsound memory.

#### 1.4.2 Humanizing Lenin

Stoppard uses a variety of aural effects to add to much of the play's sense of pastiche and cliché, in order to make travesties of Joyce and Tzara. Contrary to this, three singular aural effects assist to define the more realistic and human representations of the characters of Lenin and his wife Nadya: the sound of a train (84), a 'climactic note' (86), and Stoppard's on-going inclusion of the '*"Appassionata" Sonata by Beethoven*' (89).

The train is heard after Nadya tells of Lenin's intention to return to Russia, and Lenin reads aloud his telegram to his sister:

LENIN: "Arriving Monday night, eleven. Tell Pravda."

(NADYA and LENIN leave.)

(*Distant sound of train setting off.*) (84)

Moments later the '*train noise becomes very loud*', intimating the train arriving at its destination, and Lenin appears in a spotlight: '*his chin jutting, his hands gripping the edge of the rostrum which is waist-high, the right hand at the same time gripping a cloth cap. . . a justly famous image*' (84). Whereas the role of artists seems continually reduced to mere

entertainment and associated with linguistic and aural fragmentation, Stoppard explores Lenin's role with the very concrete sound of a train, carrying with it associations of destination and, confirmed by the 'famous image', destiny. With the 'climactic note' at the end of Lenin's speech (86), Stoppard can be understood as striking a single, resonant tone to further underscore the cultural and political importance of Lenin.

In addition to concretizing Lenin's life and actions with the sound effects mentioned above, it is possible to demonstrate that Stoppard further humanizes the two Russian characters by the inclusion of Nadya's emotional reminiscences of Lenin's reactions to certain forms of art: in particular, his reaction to the *Appassionata* sonata. While most of the aural elements support a sense of artifice and parody in *Travesties*, the author's inclusion of Beethoven's *Appassionata* departs from this general rule. Therefore, this classical piece can be understood as defining the emotional depth within the characters of Nadya and Lenin: a definition which is an aberration from the general two-dimensional characters within the play. In the acknowledgements of the play, Stoppard writes: 'Nearly everything spoken by Lenin and Nadezhda Krupskaya herein comes from his Collected Writings and from her *Memories of Lenin*' (15). Stoppard's passages of choice from these texts include references to various art forms and, particularly, references to Krupskaya's perception of Lenin's experience of music. In *Travesties*, Stoppard extends these references into the aural realm by providing *Appassionata* sound cues. In his discussion of audience reactions to music, Di Benedetto claims that 'the use of these sounds captures our attention and has the potential to evoke emotions and feelings...' <sup>99</sup> and Stoppard's choices can be seen as reflecting an awareness of this 'potential' to move an audience towards greater sympathy with these two characters through the inclusion of the Beethoven sonata.

Stoppard's choice of this particular sonata is also suited to the historical fate of Lenin, carrying within its structure and tone concepts such as tragedy and/or comedy. Robert S. Hatten states: 'A familiar opposition for music is that between the major and minor modes in the Classical style. Minor has a narrower range of meaning than major, in that minor rather consistently conveys the tragic.' <sup>100</sup> Composed in F minor and with particular, consistent use of the lowest range of notes on the piano, it is significant, I suggest, that Stoppard inserts this particular aural element to remind the audience of the character's fate. The first movement,

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<sup>99</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 125.

<sup>100</sup> Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 36.

which is the one the audience hears, is referred to by Hatten as ‘relentlessly tragic.’<sup>101</sup> The music continues throughout and beyond Lenin’s soliloquy, carrying potential allusion to his political fate and early death – known to the audience and made all the more poignant by this ‘tragic first movement’.<sup>102</sup> This speech marks the exit of the character of Lenin from the play and Stoppard directs that the ‘LIGHT GOES OUT on him. He leaves.’ (89). And, rather than having the music cut out or fade as symbolic of Lenin’s political reaction, however, Stoppard instructs that ‘*the music continues*’ as Nadya reminisces of her and Lenin’s time apart and how she would ‘stand on a particular square of pavement on the Shpalernaya’, in the hope he would catch a glimpse of her during his imprisonment (89). The music, which underscored the conflict in Lenin’s praise, and subsequent dismissal, of the dangerous nature of great art, now accompanies a recollection of their loving relationship and of Nadya’s commitment to Lenin, adding yet another emotional dimension to the characters and making them, and the very human difficulties of their situation and their relationship, all the more real.

The suggestion that Lenin is emotionally susceptible to the effects of music and other arts is first introduced a little over half-way through the first act; Stoppard has Tzara link music to Lenin’s emotions: ‘when someone at the bar piano started to play a Beethoven sonata. Lenin went completely to pieces and when he recovered he dried his eyes and lashed into the Dadaists’ (45). This observation creates the first link between music and emotions: a link Stoppard goes on to strengthen in his exposition of a more complete and rounded characterization of the revolutionary. It also acts as a further differentiation between the two opposing arguments of ‘art’ and ‘politics’. As Corballis notes: ‘what looks on paper like a delicate balance between the two forces is disturbed on the stage by the fact that the Lenins enjoy a closer liaison with the audience than do the artists, who are bloodless figments of Old Carr’s imagination.’<sup>103</sup>

One reason for this ‘closer liaison’ is Stoppard’s creation of contradiction within the character of Lenin, in addition to the emotional recollections by Nadya. After an especially long rant by Lenin against bourgeois art, Nadya comments:

Ilyich wrote those remarks in 1903 during the first revolution. He wrote very little about art and literature, generally, but he enjoyed it. We sometimes went to concerts and the theatre, even the music hall – he laughed a lot at the clowns – and he was moved to tears when we saw *La Dame aux Camelias* in London in 1907. (86)

<sup>101</sup> Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 87.

<sup>102</sup> Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 91.

<sup>103</sup> Corballis, ‘Critical Views on *Travesties*’, 76.



Her relating these events, which the audience understands as real occurrences in Lenin's life, act, therefore, as a softening effect to his otherwise strident political nature. Soon after, she explains his ability to change his mind: 'Once, in 1919, we went to a concert in the Kremlin and an actress started disclaiming something by Mayakovsky' (87) A little later, she relates Lenin's negative reaction to the writer but how, later on, he came to accept this writer's literature when he realized what it meant to young revolutionaries. Lenin is given a heart that is swayed upon seeing people moved by great art, but not by populism or sentimentalism. Stoppard has Nadya clearly differentiate between what Ilyich considered populist:

And finally the last time we went to the theatre, in 1922, we saw a stage version of Charles Dickens *Cricket on the Hearth*. After the first act, Ilyich found it dull. The saccharine sentimentality got on his nerves, and during the conversation between the old toymaker and his blind daughter he could stand it no longer and we left. (89)

Having established Lenin's distaste for populist art forms, Stoppard directs that '*the "Appassionata" Sonata of Beethoven is quietly introduced*' (89) immediately after Nadya contextualizes the music: 'I remember him one evening at a friend's house in Moscow, listening to a Beethoven Sonata'. By introducing this classical, aural element at this point, on the cusp of Nadya's chronology of Lenin's lessening patience, Stoppard offers a crystal clear differentiation: whatever reservations he has about Dickens, Lenin can be emotionally moved by, at least, this one particular musical endeavor:

I don't know of anything greater than the Appassionata. Amazing, superhuman music. It always makes me feel, perhaps naively, it makes me feel proud of the miracles that human beings can perform. But I can't listen to music often. It affects my nerves, makes me want to say nice stupid things and pat the heads of those people who while living in this vile hell can create such beauty. Nowadays we can't pat heads, or we'll get our hands bitten off. We've got to *hit* heads, hit them without mercy, though ideally we're against doing violence to people ... Hm, one's duty is infernally hard ...' (89)

In having Lenin relate emotionally to the *Appassionata*, Stoppard demonstrates the ability of the individual to be moved, thus creating the tension between the character's emotive appreciation and his ideological negation of art: the idea that it might weaken his political resolve.

Earlier versions of *Travesties* elicit wide-spread criticism that the realism of the Lenin character does not fit the style of the play. Hunter writes that the 'strangeness of *Travesties* comes partly from the fact that Stoppard determined to include Lenin onstage alongside, yet not part of, a glittering burlesque, and then from the fact that he chose *not* to fictionalize

him.’<sup>104</sup> Further to this, Fleming observes ‘that while the play is supposed to take place in Carr’s memory, the Lenin section seems to take place outside of it.’<sup>105</sup> This view is supported by Feldman: ‘Carr does not appear to have witnessed the Lenin material in act 2 (which) takes places outside his consciousness and is not subject to the Wildean travesty which plays have with the historical material in act 1.’<sup>106</sup> Stoppard’s revisions for the 1993 production did make the characters of Lenin and Nadya more absurd. Significantly, however, the changes made by Stoppard are visual and textual and little affect his sound cues. They include comments by Carr, and Lenin sports a blond wig for a time. Feldman also observes that Stoppard, briefly, makes Lenin a parody ‘of Wilde’s Algernon – ‘Really, if the lower orders don’t set us a good example...’ - and Lady Bracknell-‘To lose one revolution is unfortunate...’ such that the previous more autobiographical Lenin is subsumed into the role ‘imposed upon him by Carr’s prismatic memory.’<sup>107</sup> Feldman also notes that the costuming change in which Lenin and Nadya appear in the guise of Chasuble and Miss Prism came from the actor performing the role of Carr in the 1993 production: Anthony Scher. In a letter to Stoppard, dated 6 July 1993, Scher writes: ‘I like the idea of finding some way of getting the Lenins into “Importance” or vice versa. Could this be achieved on p.79 as different disguises are considered “in the semi-delirium of the night”? A governess and a priest – at a railway station – with a handbag?’<sup>108</sup> Despite the 1993 revisions, however, I argue that Stoppard only manages to slightly degrade the more realistic and emotionally expressive Lenin, and, by continuing to accompany his historical and political evolution with the tragic tones of Beethoven’s *Appassionata*, invites greater emotional identification from the audience.

### 1.4.3 An absurd degeneration

Having established this deeper characterization for Lenin and Nadya, Stoppard ambushes his audience once more. His stage directions read: ‘*the “Appassionata” swells in the dark to cover the set change ... (and) degenerates absurdly into “Mr Gallagher and Mr Shean.”*’ (89). Stoppard turns this two-hander, considered one of ‘the most famous songs to come from vaudeville’<sup>109</sup> into a parody of Wilde’s overly polite acquaintances Gwendolyn and Cecily, who sing in rhyming text for a possible<sup>110</sup> eleven verses:

<sup>104</sup> Jim Hunter, *Tom Stoppard*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 123.

<sup>105</sup> Fleming, *Stoppard’s Theatre*, 104.

<sup>106</sup> Feldman, *Dramas of the Past*, 90-91.

<sup>107</sup> Feldman, *Dramas of the Past*, 92.

<sup>108</sup> Feldman, *Dramas of the Past*, 92.

<sup>109</sup> www.wikipedia.org Web. 5 Nov. 2014.

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mister\\_Gallagher\\_and\\_Mister\\_Shean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mister_Gallagher_and_Mister_Shean)> n. page.

CECILY: Oh Gwendolen, Oh Gwendolen  
 I'd like you to be the first to know  
 Tristan's hanging up his hat  
 for the proletariat  
 We have an understanding—

GWEN: (rising) Just a mo- (92)

With this popular and still-recognizable Vaudeville routine and tune, Stoppard creates a clear division between the historical record: the world of Lenin, Nadya, their lives and politics, and the various realities of the other characters of Old Carr's memory.

The final aural element is the inclusion of '*Music appropriate to the period*' in the penultimate scene in *Travesties* (97). While Stoppard's text replicates much of the sense and structure of the final scene in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the music belongs to a different tradition. Whereas Wilde's play ends in a tableau, capturing a stylistic image, Stoppard's resolution of the events in Zurich engages his comic characters in a dance: '*A formal short dance sequence...The effect is of course a complete dislocation of the play*' (97). The dance delivers to the audience a happy resolution to the chain of events within Old Carr's mind. As Macrae Richmond notes: 'The importance of dances on the Elizabethan stage and in Shakespeare's plays can hardly be exaggerated: it is probably true that no performance of his plays...was regarded as complete without a dance'<sup>111</sup>, while of Restoration performance, J.L. Styan remarks: 'it was a practice to bring a comedy to an end by contriving an occasion for music and dance'.<sup>112</sup> Nadel observes, however, that the dance not only 'expresses his (Stoppard's) union of ideas and farce clearly: Tzara dances with Gwendolen, Carr with Cecily' but that more complex ideas are at work. As 'a complete dislocation', the music represents a break with the imagined history of the characters and the reality that re-enters in the form of Old Carr and Old Cecily. Nadel argues that the 'scene functions to blend time and character... anticipating the conclusion of *Arcadia*.'<sup>113</sup> I suggest, however, that this is underestimate Stoppard's skill in the creation of the final scene of this later play. In *Travesties*, the aural elements have always only ever existed as a projection of Old Carr's imagination and, as such, exist within the same time frame which he has inhabited since the

<sup>110</sup> Stoppard writes: 'The fourth and fifth verses may be omitted in performance. (90)

<sup>111</sup> Hugh Macrae Richmond, *Shakespeare's Theatre: A Dictionary of His Stage Context* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 134-35.

<sup>112</sup> J. L. Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 172.

<sup>113</sup> Nadel, *Double Act*, 249.

start of the play, and which he still inhabits when he dances back on with Old Cecily. As I intend to argue in the following chapter, to ‘blend time’ through the use of aural elements is not something Stoppard achieves with appreciable success until *Arcadia* in 1993.

### 1.5 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated a multitude of different ways in which Stoppard uses aural elements in his two plays *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Travesties*. I have compared how aural elements in both plays emphasize the stylistic conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd and have demonstrated how Stoppard’s aural intertextual allusions provide narrative clues for the audience. I have suggested that Stoppard shows greater sophistication as a playwright in *Travesties* and that this can be demonstrated by the broader and more complex inclusions of aural elements. Whereas Stoppard, in his first play, confines his aural effects to the music of the Tragedians and a sea soundscape at the start of the third act, he ‘goes to town’ in *Travesties* and includes burlesque, popular and classical music, a variety of sound effects and rhythmical chanting, limericks and nonsensical dialogue

In terms of structure, my analysis of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, has shown that contrastive shifts from silence to music or, in the final scene, to the soundscape of the sea, mark transitions from a more passive existential space to a space of narrative action. I have also demonstrated that the music of the Tragedians – most particularly the recorder – performs as a structural and thematic device in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Structurally, the musical tones of the recorder establish a direct historical link to the Elizabethan age and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, upon which Stoppard bases his play, as well as (in addition to the Tragedians instruments) performing a heralding function within the narrative. Moreover, I have demonstrated how, thematically, the recorder is a direct allusion to *Hamlet* and the prince of Denmark’s postulations on fate and betrayal, and that Stoppard positions the recorder music at decisive junctures in the evolution of the characters’ fates.

In the case of *Travesties*, I have argued that Stoppard incorporates an especially varied range of aural elements in order to create a sense of artifice so that the play aligns stylistically with its intertextual bedmate: Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*. This has been demonstrated by the author’s use of stylistic aural elements including exaggerated sound effects, nonsensical, rhythmic dialogue, chanting, and popular and burlesque music, all of which mirror the unstable reminiscing of Stoppard’s chorus: Old Carr. In addition, I have demonstrated how Stoppard delineates aurally between the more one-dimensional pastiche characterizations and more humanized realizations of the Lenins. By associating the figure of

Lenin with Beethoven's *Appassionata*, Stoppard creates the comparative dynamic of realism set against multiplicity of absurdist dialogue and soundscapes.

Finally, I have suggested that Stoppard, in both plays, uses silence, sound effects and music with a developing sophistication to engage his audience at a level beyond that of the spoken text in order to promote a greater emotional response. It is a development that comes to fruition in the play to be discussed in the following chapter: *Arcadia*.

## Chapter Two: *Arcadia*

And let us, ciphers to this great account,  
On your imaginary forces work.

Chorus, *King Henry V*<sup>114</sup>

### 2.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter will focus on Stoppard's inclusion of music and other sound effects in his 1993 play *Arcadia*, and the ways in which, in addition to textual and visual devices, they reinforce and expand many of the themes and, ultimately, conflate the temporal boundaries of the play's two historical eras: the early nineteenth century and 'the present day'.<sup>115</sup> First and foremost, I will argue that Stoppard has designed a play in which temporal boundaries are continually brought into question, overlap and, finally, merge, through the sharing of the spoken word, objects, and the mirroring of modern characters with those of the earlier period. In short, Stoppard uses a wide range of techniques to obfuscate temporal definition, inviting the audience to perceive the past as very much a part of the present on stage. If anything, Stoppard playfully presents any number of temporal incongruities to convince his audience that the impossibility of two periods co-existing is, in fact, possible. To conclude, I will show how the waltz which ends the play is the logical culmination of Stoppard attempts to reveal time as recurrent and not exclusive.

In the opening scene of Stoppard's 1993 play *Arcadia*, the precocious character Thomasina observes to her tutor Septimus that 'when you stir your rice pudding...the spoonful of jam spreads itself around...but if you stir it backwards, the jam will not come together again. Indeed, the pudding does not notice and continues to turn pink' (8). Stoppard extends this metaphor into the architecture of his play. Therefore, although the scenes alternate between the early 1800s and 'the present day' (22), the interlocking themes of order and chaos, discovery and entropy, life and death, and self-control and passion 'spread', like jam, across both periods in the play, strengthening the similarities between them. Both periods have their passionate adventurers and their inquiring minds, and Stoppard is speaking for the inquiring minds past and present in the play when he has Hannah tell Valentine that it is: 'wanting to know that makes us matter. Otherwise we're going out the way we came in' (102). While the characters from both time frames are separated physically on stage for most of the play, in the final scene Stoppard merges the two time frames such that they inhabit the same

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<sup>114</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed., T.W. Craik, (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995), 1.1.18-19.

<sup>115</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 22. (Unless other stated all references in this chapter are to this edition.)

stage space. Throughout the play, the playwright's use of off-stage diegetic sound effects supports the temporal separation. In the final scene, however, multiple aural effects further confuse the overlapping temporal markers established by objects and mirrored dialogue until Stoppard, finally, has two characters from each time end the play by waltzing to the same 'piano music from (the) next room' in 1812.<sup>116</sup> This chapter, therefore, will demonstrate that, in addition to reinforcing the play's themes, aural elements play a vital role in creating the ambiguous temporal space in *Arcadia*.

In the stately home of Sidley Park, characters both past and present are intent on exploring what Enoch Brater calls a 'fusion rather than a confusion of matters erotic, pastoral, and arithmetic.'<sup>117</sup> For Thomasina in 1809, for example, both love and physics are puzzles to be resolved. It is love, however, which Stoppard links to her piano playing and her desire to dance the waltz. In the present day, he has the character of Gus play improvisations on the piano, thus providing an aural link to the process of scientific research in the form of chaos theory. Both characters are intellectual geniuses but their passions are demonstrated musically. In the modern era, Stoppard has Valentine explain how the 'unpredictable and the predetermined unfold together to make everything the way it is', thus suggesting resolution (64). The unpredictable for Valentine is the 'noise' involved in the collection of data (62) and Hannah's lack of romance is intrinsically linked to a lack of music and not wanting to dance.

To date, the limited analysis of aural elements in any of Stoppard's plays is centred almost entirely round the final scene in *Arcadia* and the waltz music which accompanies the two dancing couples: Thomasina and Septimus, and Hannah and Gus. This focus is not surprising, as the waltz occurs as the ultimate denouement, uniting previously separated time frames and marrying the themes of romantic pursuit and scientific rationale, offering some sense of resolution to the dispute at the heart of the play. In addition, the waltz is seen by some as a physical representation of one of the play's much-discussed scientific motifs, and as Johann Hari claims: 'suggests that we are forever re-enacting the patterns of the past with mild variations – or, in other words, that the human heart beats to an iterated algorithm.'<sup>118</sup> It is possible, however, that this focus on the waltz has also contributed to a general disregard for the other music, and sound effects, with which Stoppard highlights many of the play's themes: a flock of rooks, mechanized thumping, and piano music (other than the waltz). This

<sup>116</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia: A Play* (London: Samuel French, 1993), 92.

<sup>117</sup> Enoch Brater, 'Playing for Time (and Playing with Time) in Tom Stoppard's "Arcadia"', *Comparative Drama*, (Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University: 2005) 39.2, 157-168

<sup>118</sup> Johann Hari, 'Is Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* the greatest play of our age?' Rev. *Arcadia*, dir. David Leveaux. [www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk) 22 May 2009. n. page.

chapter, therefore, will look beyond the hereto limited analysis and investigate the oft-ignored uses of music and sound effects in *Arcadia*. In addition, it will present a variety of theories as to the significance of the music of the waltz in the play's final scene but argue that all miss the fundamental importance of the way in which music undermines restrictive temporal parameters by the creation of non-temporal imaginative realities.

## 2.2 Structural and temporal balance

Stoppard reiterates the idea of structural and temporal balance between the two time periods in the stage directions at the start of scene two: '*the action of the play shuttles back and forth between the early nineteenth century and the present day, always in this same room...The general appearance of the room should offend neither period*' (22). As Ronald Leach points out, already at the start of scene two, the playwright is blurring the lines between the two time periods, 'so that the audience can hardly distinguish the two... as if time is an illusion.'<sup>119</sup> Further to this, of the original production, Brater writes how Stoppard uses 'set, costume, and music to track and trace *the fluidity of time* built into the script' (my emphasis).<sup>120</sup> The 'illusion' is fundamental to the play's exposition and the poignancy of its resolution and I propose the playwright uses visual, textual and aural cues to confound the audience's temporal perceptions and suggest time's 'fluidity'. Physically, the same objects exist in both times. There is the theodolite which Noakes uses, in 1809, to 'take bearings' and with which he spies Septimus and Mrs Chater 'in carnal embrace in the gazebo' (5). Its role is echoed when the present day Lady Coverley catches Chloë and Bernard having sex 'in that cottage...She was rescuing a theodolite' (130). It is an unquestionable link between past and present, and when Hannah Jarvis takes it into the garden '*from the table*' in the present day, it is symbolic in the sense that she will be surveying Noakes' landscape design with his theodolite and seeing it through his eyes. Textually, characters from the two different periods repeat phrases and ideas. Thomasina and Chloë both inquire whether they are the 'first person to have thought of this' (9)/ 'the first person to think of this' (99). Lady Croom and the latter-day Valentine Coverley put the focus on 'noise' (57, 62), and Thomasina and Valentine share mixed feelings about their grouse-hunting heritage (20, 62). Visually, characters from both periods wear Regency period costumes in the final scene and both time periods exist on stage simultaneously to 'disrupt the notion that past and present are entirely discrete entities',<sup>121</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Roland Leach, 'Arcadia by Tom Stoppard', <<http://www.sunlinepress.com.au/sunline/arcadia.html>> 2013. n.page.

<sup>120</sup> Brater, 'Playing for Time', *Comparative Drama*, 39.2, 2005, 157-168; 164

<sup>121</sup> Leach. 'Arcadia by Tom Stoppard'. n.page.



Prior to the final scene, the two time periods have alternated from scene to scene. In scene seven, however, Stoppard demonstrates, once again, his ability to ambush the audience's expectations, and interrupts the pattern. In doing so, he allows the two temporal spaces to co-exist. The distance of the textual and physical mirroring is dramatically reduced so that they overlap. At first, this carefully structured conflation disrupts, with its intrusive aural effects and multiple comings and goings among the characters. However, this sense of disruption ceases when a final pattern emerges. In a play which explores the emergence of orderly patterns from chaos, the disruption is truly stilled upon the enactment of the final dance, made fluid by the aural shift from modern dance music to that of the Romantic-era waltz.

Stoppard's exploration of this idea of balance and the need to embrace both the emotional and the rational can be seen in the links he makes between his four main characters. Septimus and Hannah are each period's parallel rationalists, and contemplate potential romantic involvement. Stoppard juxtaposes them by having both defy their natural inclinations: Septimus decides he 'must not' make love to Thomasina, despite his well-established proclivity for sexual congress, while Hannah finally acquiesces to Gus' infatuation and allows herself to take part in the Romantic dance. Further interlinking occurs by having two characters create dissonant piano music: Thomasina in 1809 and Gus in the present day. As Leach observes: '[T]he piano can be seen to link Thomasina and Gus who are both suspected of being geniuses...this draws a parallel between the two characters and the two different eras'<sup>122</sup>. Thomasina plays for much of the third scene: 'Effects Plot...Cue 4',<sup>123</sup> followed almost immediately by Gus who plays for lengthy periods in scene four: 'Effects Plot...Cue 5 - Cue 7.'<sup>124</sup> In addition to numerous other parallels which span the gap between their respective periods, Stoppard strengthens these links aurally by associating the unconventional piano playing to the two intensely individualistic and scientifically-talented characters in the play. Other associations are also implied. Whereas Thomasina imagines a future of change, Gus has links to her past, seemingly knowing things no one else could, such as the whereabouts of 'the foundations of Capability Brown's boat-house' (65). When Thomasina plays the piano, she does so as a disruptive influence, loud enough to be noticed over Lady Croom's on-stage pronouncements. As well as referring to it as 'noise', Lady Croom opines to Septimus: 'restrict your lessons to the *piano* side of the instrument and let her loose on the *forte* when she has learned something' (57). This comment comes across as

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<sup>122</sup> Leach, 'Arcadia by Tom Stoppard'. n. page.

<sup>123</sup> Stoppard, *Arcadia: A play*, 91.

<sup>124</sup> Stoppard, *Arcadia: A play*, 91.

somewhat ironic given that the tutor is already aware of his pupil's genius, so much so that he has had to resort to back-translation trickery to occupy her. What the audience is offered is passionate 'noise', railing against her teacher's lack of respect and her fate: that of being an inventive intellect and a girl genius within the social and scientific confines of her age. By playing 'noise' Thomasina leaves classical order behind, and the piano helps in the characterizing of her as a spirited explorer reaching beyond classic, Newtonian physics. In the following scene Stoppard has Gus play a piano: a piano the audience assumes to be the same as that played by Thomasina, unseen and in the same off-stage music room.

The character of Gus is more mysterious. It is as if, by denying this character the spoken word, Stoppard allows for more expansive and diffuse perceptions of his other abilities. His physical actions, therefore, take on greater significance and his emotional expression is more closely linked to the aural element of the off-stage piano. In contrast to Thomasina's on-going impassioned 'noise', Gus' playing is another of his understated interventions, and the music is less intrusive as it stops and starts throughout scene four. Valentine informs us that Gus 'makes it (the music) up' (65), which suggests the music as a link between Gus' explorative nature and that of Thomasina. It can be suggested that for a non-speaking character like Gus this aural element is one way of getting noticed by Hannah. When he provides the solution to her puzzle, it is music which allows him to succeed in his romantic overtures. By the time Count Zelinsky (one can assume) is playing the waltz on the piano in the final scene, it has come to be associated with the two young people and provides a structural bridge between the two time periods. There is a sense of appropriateness when Septimus and Hannah are embraced by the sages of their respective times and are relieved of some of their jaded skepticism in the face of youthful hope at the end of the play.

### **2.3 Off-stage aural elements**

Of all the aural elements which so pervade *Arcadia*, none originate on stage. As many of these aural elements represent devices which are understood as being part of the exterior garden space beyond the on-stage room, the off-stage nature of their respective sound effects is appropriate. So are the other sound effects which conjure up the 'park' beyond Sidley Park house: the crow-calls at dawn and the firing of guns. There is a sense of distance created by the off-stage sounds, belonging as they do to a world beyond the school room at Sidley Park, and although they are referred to by the characters, these appropriate, distant sound effects complete the mimetic effect in the minds of the audience. As Steven Di Benedetto claims:

‘Even when we do not see what object is making a noise, we endeavor to create a semblance of the object in our mind.... to make concrete what we hear... to imagine its size and mass to give shape to it.... to make manifest the origins of the sound by imagining the object that made the sound.’<sup>125</sup> In short, the use of aural elements stimulates the audience’s imagination beyond the visual, opening their minds to possibilities beyond what they merely see.

In a narrative which relies on sexual shenanigans in the park’s gazebo and the wholesale loss of the idyllic Sidley Park landscape, aural elements help to validate the reality of an exterior space filled with dalliances, conflict and a landscape in transition, fleshing out, as it were, the referential on-stage dialogue. The danger of Septimus’ dalliance with Mrs Chater is made manifest in the ‘*pistol shot*’, for example, when it is first heard at the end of the first act (71) and in *reprise* at the start of scene six (90). The inclusion of this sound acts as a reminder to the audience of Septimus and Chater’s agreement to a dawn duel, and the ‘*cry of dozens of crows disturbed from the unseen trees*’ (71) link the ‘shot’ to death, associated as crows, rooks and ravens are with foreboding and doom. In other words, each soundscape alerts the audience to particular unseen props and characters and their roles within the narrative, marking them as significant in some way, despite their invisibility.

Whereas some sound effects are disposed to suggest a landscape exterior, the piano suggests an interior space. The decision to remove it from the stage, therefore, suggests the desire to create a distancing effect of another kind by having the piano music emanate from the unseen music room next door. The removal of a direct visual link to the piano means that the audience is also freed from the visual distraction of one or more characters playing it on stage. It also, arguably, increases the significance of the off-stage music as there are no visual forewarnings as to when the music is about to begin. When the music does commence, it ‘is brought into hearing range, or is moved from backstage to centerstage’<sup>126</sup>, and in doing so incites narrative comment from the play’s characters, mirrors the emotions and feelings of the invisible players, and/or emphasizes the themes in the play. Throughout *Arcadia*, the piano music accompanies significant discussions of the play’s major themes, many of which explore philosophical and scientific ideas well beyond the comedic minutiae of the social fracas and romantic entanglements. Therefore, the unseen nature of the piano and, subsequently, the disembodied piano music can also be seen as suggestive of uncertainty or the, as yet, unknown. The idea of music eliciting the audience’s emotional engagement in existential

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<sup>125</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 129-30.

<sup>126</sup> Leo Treitler, *Music and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 20.

themes is nothing new and Treitler states that ‘a topos of music-aesthetic discussions in Germany after the turn of the nineteenth century (was) the idea that music is capable of arousing an awareness of the eternal’.<sup>127</sup>

By its absence from the stage, the piano in *Arcadia* is also given a lesser role as prop-in-waiting and a greater aural presence. In her thesis: *Ibsen’s Piano*, Sofija Todić explores ideas surrounding the piano as an on-stage prop in three of Ibsen’s plays. Todić analyzes the idea of this onstage prop ‘from the perspective of the piano’s double nature of both a “non-verbal”, essentially *visual* object, and an *auditory* object adorned with a “voice”.<sup>128</sup> One of Todić’s observations is that the involvement of a visual prop such as a piano, prior to being played can also create a ‘feeling of “homeliness” in the dramas’ albeit an ‘ambiguous’ one in the case of Ibsen.<sup>129</sup> In *Arcadia*, it might also be said that Stoppard diminishes any sense of ‘homeliness’ by removing all that might be considered extraneous and distracting from the stage, including the ‘auditory’ piano. As a result, those props which are visually available are rendered more significant by their mere presence. Indeed, the table can be said to play a central role, collecting as it does, throughout the play, the detritus of intellectual rigour and forbidden fruit. Furthermore, by removing the piano, the ‘voice’ is paradoxically made both distant and more significant when it does speak.

## 2.4 Themes

In *Arcadia*, Stoppard uses contrasting aural elements to further emphasize the tensions between the multiple, intertwining themes. The major themes include order versus chaos, the human spirit and its pursuit of knowledge in an entropic world, and the conflict between passionate impulse and rational thought. As previously mentioned, Stoppard does not so much polarize these thematic elements as have them balance on a divide. The thump thump of the steam pump can be perceived as representing Newtonian science, its repetitive nature synonymous with an orderly universe, until Thomasina intuits what comes to be recognized by Valentine as entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics. When the piano is played with emotion in the adjoining room, it is indicative of the disorderliness of human passion and the ‘attraction that Newton left out’ (100). In what is arguably one of Stoppard’s most successful conclusions to one of his plays in a half century of writing for the theatre, he uses

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<sup>127</sup> Treitler, *Music and the Historical Imagination*, 20.

<sup>128</sup> Sofija Todić. ‘Ibsen’s Piano: A Cultural and Literary Analysis of *A Doll House*, *Hedda Gabler* and *John Gabriel Borkman* from the Perspective of the Piano as a Visual and Auditory Element in the Plays’ (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2010), 2.

<sup>129</sup> Todić, ‘Ibsen’s Piano’, 4.

waltz music to resolve the climactic chaos of the final scene, if only temporarily, with a promise of order. The one hundred and eighty year temporal divide is conflated by a variety of theatrical devices, not least the merging of contrastive sounds and music into one fluid melody at the end of the play.

#### **2.4.1 Order versus chaos – Classical vs Romantic**

Stoppard establishes the tension between order and chaos from the start of *Arcadia* by presenting the concepts of mathematics and human desire in a discussion between the tutor Septimus and his pupil Thomasina. When Thomasina questions Newton's theories, the idea of an ordered physical world begins to fall apart. Comically, cracks in the social order also appear with the news that Septimus has been seen 'in carnal embrace in the gazebo' with a house guest, Mrs Chater (5). When the cuckolded Mr Chater descends on Septimus demanding social order be restored through the time-honored tradition of a duel, the tutor sends Thomasina from the room. Significantly, while the majority of exits by the characters in the play are to the exterior garden or to other parts of the house, Stoppard has Septimus instruct Thomasina to 'take Fermat into the music room. There will be an extra spoonful of jam if you find his proof' (10). The reference is to Fermat's last theorem, which 'has kept people busy for a hundred and fifty years' (4) and the exit establishes the existence of an off-stage musical space: the 'music room', in addition to creating a textual link between mathematics and music: a link which is continually underscored throughout the play.

The stage direction for the first aural element in *Arcadia* reads: '*The distant popping of guns heard*' (20) and punctuates a speech by the opinionated Lady Croom, the chatelaine of Sidley Park in 1809 and 1812. Secure in her place in the world and in the order of things, Lady Croom exits with her coterie of obedient men and '*guns are heard again, a little closer*' (20). By including these sound effects, Stoppard strengthens the associations to the rural setting and upper-class participants by bringing the sounds of the bird-shoot into the room. There is nothing threatening as such about the 'popping' aural elements but the idea of nature being subdued is expressed by both the sound effects and Thomasina's observation. Upon hearing the guns, she comments on the pattern of avian slaughter throughout her childhood and the significance of the repetitive 'pop, pop, pop...I have grown up in the sound of guns like the child of a siege...pop – pop – pop' (20). This reference and the sounds of guns can be interpreted, therefore, as oppressive to her, giving the audience an understanding of her sense of isolation, in a world of regularity and tradition. Stoppard's particular choice of the preposition 'in' to the verb phrase 'grown up' further suggests her immersion in the sound

and what it represents which adds to her feelings of being besieged. As an inquiring mind, she is stultified by the society which surrounds her. It is Septimus who recognizes her as a chaotic element confined to classical traditions, and, as Valentine explains to Hannah later: ‘When your Thomasina was doing maths it had been the same maths for a couple of thousand years. Classical. And for a century after Thomasina.’ (61). What Valentine slowly comes to accept is Thomasina’s departure from the strict order of Newtonian physics, and her genius in recognizing patterns emerging from chaos. When the final revelation occurs to him, it does so to the soundscape of celebratory ‘*party music*’ (126).

Hunter points out that Stoppard chooses the earlier time period explicitly to highlight the conflict between ‘Romanticism and Classicism: Order and Disorder’, suggesting that the chosen period represents a time of ‘revolution’ when ‘music and literature (in their) old forms are being broken up and superseded’.<sup>130</sup> This shift from an ordered Classicism to a less-restrained Romanticism is clearly demonstrated by the playwright’s inclusion of the waltz and waltz music. The restraint of classical Regency Era long-dances with their group formations is nothing compared to the new Regency craze exciting Thomasina: ‘I will be despised if I do not waltz! It is the most fashionable and gayest and boldest invention conceivable – started in Germany!’ (109). This reference to the waltz as an ‘invention’ also complements the contrast in the final scene between the fluidity of its music and the ‘*rhythmic thump*’ of that other new invention, Noakes’ steam pump (112). Stoppard can also be said to be embodying the attributes of Classicism and Romanticism in the characters of the passionate, reckless, Byronic researcher Bernard who is ‘[B]ouncy on his feet’ (46), and the more methodical, dance-resistant Hannah, whose systematic and rational approach to life and research is in direct opposition to his:

Bernard            Christ, what do you want?

Hannah          Proof

...

Bernard            Proof? *Proof?* You’d have to be there, you silly bitch!        (66)

Yet, whereas Bernard’s journey within the play seems not to change his view of the world, Stoppard has Hannah shifting her stance, ever so slightly in the final moments of the play to the accompaniment of the waltz music. What the playwright seems to suggest is that some of her classical reserve is being set aside. By dancing to the waltz music with the besotted Gus, it

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<sup>130</sup> Hunter, *Tom Stoppard*, 168-169.

is as if she is embracing ‘a symbol of all the things that lie beyond her rational explanations’<sup>131</sup> and finding a balance between order and chaos.

#### **2.4.2 Sexuality – unpredictable and variable**

From the beginning of the play, Stoppard sets about creating the sense of the social order in turmoil because of the rapacious sexual appetites of many of his characters. What follows is nothing less than highly comedic chaos. The first line in the play sets the scene and brings the theme of sexuality centre stage when Thomasina asks her tutor: ‘Septimus, what is carnal embrace?’ (4). The tutor, the audience soon discovers, has had a ‘perpendicular poke in a gazebo’ with Mrs Chater (12), an act which has been revealed to all and sundry, including her husband. When the ramifications from the pastoral shenanigans come to a head, it is in scene three and the piano is heard playing from within the music room. This occurs soon after Thomasina has run from the room in a fit of pique. She has been attempting an impossible back-translation of a Shakespearean text about Cleopatra, and launches into a rant as to the idiocy of human nature and love: ‘I hate Cleopatra...New love, absent love, lost love – I never knew a heroine that makes such noodles of our sex.’ (52) The passionate rage continues upon realizing that Septimus has played a trick on her, and she leaves shouting ‘Cheat! Cheat! Cheat! ... I hope you die!’ (54). Thus, when Stoppard enlists the piano as a soundscape, the audience knows it is the playing of an emotionally upset teenager railing against chaotic love. The scene it accompanies encapsulates the messy, irrational and emotional entanglements of the three men on stage: Septimus, Chater and Captain Brice, the latter whose designs on Mrs Chater’s ‘readiness’ have been waylaid by the tutor (11). Another thwarted romantic pursuit enters in the person of Lady Croom; her plans of a lengthy liaison with Lord Byron are frustrated and she is dismayed at the news of his imminent departure. Tensions among all on stage are running high as Thomasina’s rowdy piano-playing makes itself heard. Meanwhile, as one not to be contradicted, Lady Croom subjugates the men to her presence, delivers a furious Wildean entreaty, and, as the tension reaches its peak, demands an explanation of the aural element which has, by now, pervaded the scene since the men’s confrontation:

Lady Croom ‘What is that *noise*?’

*The noise is a badly-played piano in the next room. It has been going on for some time since Thomasina left.* (57)

The 1993 performance copy of *Arcadia* dictates that the ‘some time’ can commence any time after Septimus tires of his word-play with the other men:

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<sup>131</sup> Hari, ‘Is Tom Stoppard’s *Arcadia* the greatest play of our age?’, n. page.

‘Cue 4’

Septimus      “Oh yes...”

*When ready, the sound of a badly-played piano from the next room; continue until the end of SCENE 3*<sup>132</sup>

The ‘badly-played piano’ is therefore a significant aural element and adds to the emotional chaos being played out on stage. By continuing ‘until the end of SCENE 3’, Stoppard further exploits the piano music to express the fragmentation of rational adult social behaviour. The music, already loud and disruptive enough to be remarked upon by Lady Croom, continues beneath the increasingly heated demands of Brice and Septimus’ inflamed response that he will meet both Chater and Brice at dawn for a duel. The passionate piano playing dies out only at the end of the scene, simultaneously to Chater’s sudden realization of his possible, imminent death: ‘Oh! But...’ (58).

### 2.4.3 The science of chaos

The playing of the piano as thematic emphasis, established in scene three, is soon re-established, beginning again, as it does, at the start of scene four. This time, ‘*from the next room, a piano is heard, beginning to play quietly, unintrusively, improvisationally*’, and it occurs immediately after Hannah links Thomasina to scientific prowess: ‘the New Geometry of Irregular Forms discovered by Thomasina Coverley’ (59). Hunter observes that ‘the piano is not a cheap stage-effect but has been symbolic throughout, a representation in sound of randomness, and of patterns creating themselves’<sup>133</sup>. In addition to this symbolism, the improvisational style of the music in performance can be said to adumbrate Thomasina’s investigative methods of trial and error: her musings based on a motif with repeating variations. Furthermore, I propose that the improvised playing of the piano can also be perceived as an invisible commentary on Valentine’s explanation of scientific theorem: of patterns ‘making themselves out of nothing.’<sup>134</sup> This time, however, it is Gus who is the pianist, although one cannot be immediately sure of this. After the break, the ‘*piano is heard again*’ and it is not until Valentine responds to Hannah’s question, that the audience ascertains that the player is the present-day Gus (65). This temporary obscurity around the identity of the piano-player is repeated by Stoppard in the final scene.

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<sup>132</sup> Stoppard, *Arcadia: A play*, 91.

<sup>133</sup> Hunter, *Tom Stoppard*, 197.

<sup>134</sup> Hunter, *Tom Stoppard*, 195-96.



Stoppard's inclusion of a mute character who expresses himself through deed and disembodied sound adds dissonance. Although his family treats his behaviour as nothing unusual, the audience can be forgiven for wondering about Gus. Therefore, I suggest that his piano playing, as a form of communication, may be perceived as being more significant because of his non-verbal communication. In short, what Gus plays carries a greater perceptual weight, further underscoring the theme of chaos theory. Gus and the piano are one in many respects, an invisible, aural parallel to Valentine's explanation about the science of chaos theory; his improvisation sounds like he is 'out of whack', as if 'some of the strings are missing' and that, as 'the pianist', he is 'tone deaf and drunk' (62). What Gus plays is discordant and disruptive but emulates chaos theory because 'the smallest variation blows prediction apart' by creating a soundscape demonstrating 'how the unpredictable and the predetermined fold together' (64-65). Furthermore, while the piano has supposedly been playing 'unintrusively', it creates an effect, arousing Hannah's curiosity, most notably after a 'pause'. When the piano is heard again, Hannah verbalizes the mystery that is Gus and his place in the scheme of things:

Hannah	What is he playing?
Valentine	I don't know. He makes it up
Hannah	Chloë called him 'genius' (65)

This idea of genius exists in both eras and the themes of modern-day scientific endeavor and Stoppard's exploration of chaos theory run parallel to the unpredictable improvisational music in the background. An aural element seemingly lacking structure, the piano played 'badly' or 'improvisationally' emphasizes the characters on-going references to 'noise' throughout the play, e.g. Lady Croom's opinion of Thomasina's piano playing and Valentine's declaration of how he hates the 'noise' within his research: 'Distortions. Interference. It's all very very noisy out there!' (62)

In *How Music Works*, John Powell differentiates between 'notes and noise'. He states that noise is a complex combination of sound vibrations lacking repetition and rhythm, and 'is made up a chaotic group of individual ripples which have no relationship to each other', while any definition of music requires 'a ripple pattern which repeats itself over and over again.'<sup>135</sup> While this may be true it contradicts the potential connection made by the characters in *Arcadia* - an awareness of the fine line between noise and music. While both Lady Croom and

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<sup>135</sup> John Powell, *How Music Works: A listener's guide to the science and psychology of beautiful sounds* (London: Particular Books, 2010), 22-23.

Valentine can be said to react, in turn, to the unpleasantness of the discordant nature of Thomasina's piano-playing and the nature of scientific analysis, neither character suggests the lack of a pattern:

Hannah Noise?

Valentine Distortions. Interference....It's all very noisy out there. Like a piano in the next room, it's playing your song, but unfortunately it's out of whack, some of the strings are missing and the pianist is tone deaf and drunk - I mean, the noise! Impossible!' (62)

With Valentine's speech, Stoppard uses simile to directly equate the idea of research to the soundscape of Gus' piano playing, explaining to Hannah how noise can become a pattern, and thus make it art. Therefore, despite Powell's insistence that 'noises' can only be defined as such if they are 'individual' with 'no relationship to each other' and that this is 'true of all noises which are not musical notes'<sup>136</sup>, what Stoppard seems to be offering is a concept of 'noise' as being almost always transitional, on the cusp of creating a pattern. Stoppard even has the character Valentine liken chaos theory to popular music:

Valentine You start guessing what the tune might be. You try to pick it out of the noise. You try this, you try that, you start to get something – it's half-baked but you start putting in notes which are missing or not quite the right notes... and bit by bit...(He starts to *dumdi da* to the tune of 'Happy Birthday'.) Dumdi-dum-dum, dear Val-en-tine, dumdidum-dum to you – the lost algorithm! (63).

Valentine's point is that the rhythm of 'Happy Birthday' is three-four, like that of the waltz, which Stoppard offers in the final scene to make visual the intellectual concept of an iterated algorithm. By the final scene of the play, Valentine has taken Thomasina's lesson book and 'pushed her equations through the computer a few million times' creating a resultant computer image of 'patterns making themselves out of nothing'. The belated results of Thomasina's genius leave Hannah emotionally stunned 'Oh! but...how beautiful!' and, then, from the next room, '*the piano starts to be heard*'(103). The concepts of beauty, science and music merge. However, instead of offering the audience the beauty of chaos theory visually on Valentine's computer screen, Stoppard offers the audience aural associations. Using waltz music in the final scene maintains the scientific theme of patterns repeating over time, the waltz being a continuing pattern in the form of an iterated algorithm. As the two couples

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<sup>136</sup> Powell, *How Music Works*, 22.

respond in various degrees to the ‘attraction that Newton left out’ (100), the imprecise repetition of the waltz steps ensures that each is a variation and therefore chaotic although a degree of order stems from the disorder. As Leach observes, the waltz is ‘a dance that is another iterated algorithm, always the same, always slightly different.’<sup>137</sup> In keeping with the ebb and flow of the scientific and sociological debates between the characters, any sense of resolution represented by the waltz includes a nod from Stoppard to the unpredictable nature of mathematics.

#### **2.4.4 Life and death**

The pursuit of knowledge in the face of impending doom can be said to be another example of thematic tension in Stoppard’s *Arcadia*. At the outset of *Arcadia*; Thomasina asks a question and then chides her tutor, Septimus Hodge, who has thwarted her pursuit of knowledge: ‘If *you* do not teach me the true meaning of things, who will?’ (6). Her curiosity and penchant for independent thinking, however, contradict society’s traditional views, expressed by her uncle, Captain Brice, who insists Septimus has ‘a duty to keep her in ignorance’ (17), and her mother, Lady Croom who declares ‘ignorance should be like an empty vessel waiting to be filled at the well of truth’ (18).

Leach writes: ‘The play supports the value that life needs to be lived for the moment rather than being consumed and obsessed by what lies beyond. Death is the one absolute; for the individual and the universe. Life might be trivial but it is wanting to know that makes us human. There might be no answers but it is the search that is important’.<sup>138</sup>

Stoppard introduces the idea of knowledge as an inherent part of the human psyche: with the tutor, Septimus Hodge and his student, Thomasina in 1809 and develops it further in the modern day through the characters of the three researchers: Bernard, Hannah and Valentine. Life, however, is always counter-balanced with death and entropy and they are mentioned frequently throughout the play, often accompanied by aural elements to further strengthen the symbolism. Yet, when Thomasina’s death is finally spoken of toward the end of the play, Stoppard seems to contradict the finality of death by presenting her on stage, very much alive, and in pursuit of new experience, knowledge and a passion to learn to waltz.

The juxtaposition is also represented by the metaphor of the imminent destruction of the Lady Croom’s idealized Sidley Park. Its demise from ‘a most amiable picture’ to ‘an eruption of gloomy forest and towering crag’ is imminent and Stoppard allows her to directly

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<sup>137</sup> Leach, ‘Arcadia by Tom Stoppard’. n.page.

<sup>138</sup> Leach, ‘Arcadia by Tom Stoppard’. n.page.

join her sense of loss to the theme of death by mistranslating '*Et in Arcadia ego!*' (18-19). A more direct allusion to death looming on the horizon is brought on stage with the sound effect: '*distant popping of guns*'. This initial aural element in the play is far enough away to not incite a sense of direct threat, although what little discomfort it elicits within the audience is likely increased as Thomasina lists the fallen: '[P]igeons and rooks, ...grouse ...pheasants ...partridge, snipe, woodcocks and teal – pop – pop – pop, and the culling of the herd', and Septimus alludes to death: 'A calendar of slaughter. 'Even in Arcadia, there am I!' (20-21).

The sounds of guns come to symbolize the ever-present threat of death and continue to do so at significant moments of the play. Bernard is hell-bent on uncovering a connection between Sidley Park and Byron and is most excited that this new-found knowledge might involve a death. Much of the debate around knowledge acquisition involves Hannah defying Bernard's methods in pursuit of his absolute belief that Chater died in a duel with Byron. His blind faith contradicts her more reticent and thorough approach:

Hannah	...Chater could have died of anything, anywhere.
...	
Bernard	But he fought a duel with Byron!
Hannah	You haven't established it was fought. You haven't established it was
	Byron... (67-68)

The link between game hunting and death resurfaces when Valentine reveals that Byron was indeed at Sidley Park, because his research shows Byron to be 'in the game book' (68) and, as such, Stoppard offers associations to the earlier soundscape of the 'popping guns'.

At this point in the play, the end of scene four, it is reasonable to expect that the scenic alternation between time periods will continue; there is, arguably, an expectation that the next scene will return the audience to 1809. Indeed, when all the modern day characters have exited the stage, Stoppard seems, through the use of sound effects and lighting directions, to be re-establishing the sense of 1809. The audience has already, at the end of scene three, been led to understand that Septimus has promised to meet Chater and Brice at dawn for a duel and the modern day researchers' discussion maintains this focus. Therefore, there are expectations that what follows will involve a duel in the exterior space beyond the room. Stoppard's stage directions read: '*The light changes to early morning. From a long way off there is a pistol shot. A moment later there is the cry of dozens of crows disturbed from the unseen trees*' (71). The difference with this aural element is its singularity. Rather than a 'slaughter' it suggests a possible, individual death, and the audience, having an advantage over the present-day

researchers, may associate the single ‘pistol shot’ to Septimus and Chater. What Stoppard potentially creates with this sound is an emotional reaction which will leave his audience wondering throughout the interval. All the indicators suggest a new scene, one set in 1809, and the still-uncertain fate of the tutor, the audience might assume, rests on that single ‘shot’.

Answers to any questions arising from the pre-interval sound effect are not immediately provided by Stoppard; the pattern the playwright has established between alternating scenes is subverted. Instead, death as an absolute is reduced to academic debate and the start of the second act, scene five, finds Bernard postulating his theory about the duel: ‘Did it happen? Could it happen?’ (72). The cavalier manner with which he pursues knowledge raises the hackles of his fellow researcher, Hannah: ‘Bollocks... You’ve left out everything which doesn’t fit... You’ve gone from a glint in your eye to a sure thing in a hop, skip and a jump’ (80). When Stoppard does resolve the question of the duel, he does so by beginning scene 6 with a *‘reprise: early morning – a distant pistol shot – the sound of the crows’* (90). This exact repetition of the lighting and sound effects transports the audience to 1809 and promises a resolution. As a device, these sensory references facilitate an ease of acceptance by triggering recognition in the audience, returning them to their prior experience.

In the final scene, the death of Thomasina is discussed soon after the piano *‘starts to be heard’* off-stage. With Gus having exited with Chloë in the opposite direction to the music room and, and as Hannah and Valentine delve into the past, the piano-playing strengthens audience associations to Thomasina:

Hannah	...She was dead before she had time to be famous...
Valentine	She died?
Hannah	...burned to death.
Valentine	( <i>realizing</i> ) Oh...the girl who died I the fire!
Hannah	The night before her seventeenth birthday. (103-4)

The music in the background plays beneath the two researchers establishing the fact of her death for the audience, before Stoppard returns them to their separate, silent studies: *‘Pause. Two researchers’* (104).

#### 2.4.5 Entropy

The encroaching demise of the universe is represented aurally by Mr Noakes’ ‘Improved Newcomen steam pump’ (116), and its ‘intrusive sounds ... are a reminder to the audience

that the universe is ultimately doomed'<sup>139</sup> The concept of entropy is introduced by Thomasina in the first scene. She realizes she cannot un-stir her jam from her porridge and goes on to formulate a theory refuting the Newtonian universe, as it is being taught her. Later, Thomasina connects this phenomenon to the steam pump. Entropy, to her, involves a 'heat equation (which) cares very much, it goes only one way. That is the reason Mr Noakes's engine cannot give the power to drive Mr Noakes's engine' (119). Hot only ever turns to cold and everything will eventually wind down. Yet, in the final scene, Stoppard has contrasting aural elements suggest that human passion can surpass the threat of imminent demise. The piano, however, dominates and the pump is only heard when the piano '*breaks off suddenly in mid-phrase*' and the '*silence allows us to hear the distant regular thump of the steam engine*' (111). When the piano begins again, the door to the garden is open and it is the steam engine which dominates. The steam engine's 'distant regular thump' is also echoed in another aural element: the present day '*party music from the marquee*' (126). The latter accompanies Valentine's discovery of the connection between Thomasina's theory and the 'diagram of heat exchange' (127), and continues its systematic beat while Septimus and Valentine neatly, and mutually, across the blurred temporal boundary, sum up the concept of entropy:

Septimus	So the Improved Newtonian Universe must cease and grow cold. Dear me.
Valentine	The heat goes into the mix...
Thomasina	Yes, we must hurry if we are going to dance
Valentine	And everything is mixing the same way, all the time, irreversibly... till there's no time left. That's what time means' (128).

Thomasina's intervening witticism reinforces her focus on romance rather than science. At the start of this dialogue when Septimus understands that 'we are all doomed!', she replies '(cheerfully) Yes!' (127). For Thomasina, such a fate is of little matter if she can enjoy the very pursuits which express her humanity: intellectual pursuit, dance, romance etc. By having his characters' submit to the waltz, Stoppard seems to be saying that human desire, be it for sex, love, fame or knowledge, is irrepressible, even in the face of being 'alone, on an empty shore' (128) or, as Leach puts it 'reveals that the 'dance of life' is a way of forestalling the inevitable doom of the universe'<sup>140</sup>.

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<sup>139</sup> Leach, 'Arcadia by Tom Stoppard'. n.page.

<sup>140</sup> Leach, 'Arcadia by Tom Stoppard'. n.page.

## 2.5 The final scene

For such a complex play, set as it is in two time periods and treating multiple themes, any sense of complete resolution in *Arcadia* is problematic. However, I propose that the theatrical tradition of having resolution in the final scene of a play is one which Stoppard reaffirms by having two characters from each time period dance, as couples, to the same waltz music. Furthermore, I argue that he manages this resolution by further subverting the temporal divide between the two time periods through the overlapping aural elements of the steam engine, and the piano playing prior to ‘*evening*’ (124) and the ‘*party music*’ (126). The final resolution is brought about by Stoppard presenting the non-dialogic image of a waltz in which intellectual temporal considerations become secondary and the audience surrenders to the music and the magic of the final moments of the play.

Ever one to present two sides to a story, what Stoppard does in the final scene is offer a balance. In terms of the narrative structure, while Thomasina and Septimus can be seen reaching into the future through their scientific discussion, Hannah, Valentine and Bernard are reaching back into the past. Mysteriously and significantly, Gus seems to inhabit a more nebulous middle-ground of historical consciousness and holds the key to Hannah’s research riddle. In addition, Stoppard resolves the researchers’ travails: Bernard’s brashness sees him punished, Hannah’s patience sees her rewarded, and Valentine realizes his ancestor Thomasina’s genius. At the same time, regardless of all that has been uncovered by the researchers, and Gus, the audience has come to understand how much must remain forever lost. Romantically, Thomasina has her initial question resolved and steps eagerly towards the joys of ‘carnal embrace’ and Gus’ patient endeavor is also rewarded when Hannah finally acquiesces and dances with him. Lady Croom’s lustful search for satisfaction, it seems, is a never-ending pattern in itself and is being momentarily fulfilled by the piano-playing Count Zelinsky. However, contrary to this, the sexual passions of other characters are unrequited: Chloë and Valentine are rejected by Bernard and Hannah, respectively. Life and death are finely attuned. According to the play’s scientists, and represented by the Improved Newcomen steam pump, entropy will resolve everything sooner or later and the universe ‘must cease and grow cold’ (128). Yet, despite this, Stoppard counters despair with positivism; the non-deterministic nature of the future can also suggest infinite possibility because of the unpredictable patterns emerging from chaos. The ‘regular thump’ of the entropic steam engine (111) is replaced by the hopeful romance of the waltz of 1812: the new

and daring dance of its time, the delight with which Thomasina dances to it and Hannah's submission to the possibility of love.

The aural elements throughout the final act and the waltz at its end continue the blurring of temporal boundaries which Stoppard begins at the start of scene two in *Arcadia*. The stage directions state: '*The action of the play shuttles back and forth between the early nineteenth century and the present day, always in this room*' and '*where an object from one scene would be an anachronism in another...it is simply deemed to have become invisible*' (22). In addition to the anachronistic visibility of on-stage props, the playwright further conflates audience perceptions of temporal settings in *Arcadia* through visual cross-overs featuring costumes and the mirror-image character of Augustus/Gus, from 1812 and the modern day respectively, played by the same actor. The onstage objects are handled by characters of the modern day period and are, therefore, not exclusive to the early nineteenth century and there are no sounds from the earlier era in the play which could not cross-over into the modern day. It is only by reference from characters of the period to the music and other sounds which signals their situation in the relevant temporal setting. What this allows for, then, are aural elements which are contemporaneous to both temporal spheres, thus promoting the possibilities for blurring the temporal distinctions between the early nineteenth and late twentieth centuries, an elastic distinction that Stoppard exploits when having the couples dance, seemingly, to the same music.

The use of the piano music to blur of temporal boundaries is not merely confined to the final waltz but begins earlier in scene seven. Until the start of the final scene, the two time periods have maintained an alternating pattern without the characters from either era sharing the stage space simultaneously. Scene seven, however, opens with the visual confusion of Valentine and Chloë wearing 'Regency clothes' and Gus finding himself a 'Regency coat' (99). Although the characters seem set in the modern day, when the '*piano starts to be heard*' (103) it is not the improvisational piano elements previously associated with the twentieth century Gus. In addition, Stoppard has had Gus exit with Chloë, in the opposite direction to the music room. As mentioned above, Hannah and Valentine mention Thomasina's death as the piano begins to be heard from the music room. As the only other character to have played the piano, one assumption offered to the audience is that it is Thomasina who is playing, yet this would seem to defy the temporal logic of the modern day characters' presence. If the space is to maintain temporal integrity then the only other options are that another character from the present day is playing the piano or that it is a non-diegetic effect for the audience's



benefit only: an aural commentary, as it were, on Thomasina's death. However, temporal integrity is clearly contradicted when the next character to appear is performed by the actor the audience recognizes as playing the role of Gus. This character, however, is not the reserved, silent Gus of the present, but the lively '*Lord Augustus...of 1812...laughing*', and the previous discussion of Thomasina's death is pitted against the image of her bursting onto stage, full of life, '*aged sixteen and furious*', chasing her brother (104). Dead in Hannah and Valentine's present day world, the characters are very much alive to the audience and present in what is, unarguably, now a spatial and temporal overlap. This spatial co-existence is what Josephine Machon describes as a concept which 'makes you aware of the continuing present of 'the things done in it' and connects past, present and future via location.'<sup>141</sup>

Furthering the spatial overlap and temporal ambiguity, Septimus enters and, upon Augustus' departure, Thomasina demands that they waltz: 'I will be despised if I do not waltz!' (109). Soon after her demand, any idea that the music is non-diegetic must be rejected. The piano player and the type of piano music which has accompanied the dialogue in scene seven to this point is now identified:

Thomasina: Mama has brought from town a whole book of waltzes for the Broadwood, to play with Count Zelinsky.

Septimus: I need not be told what I cannot but suffer. Count Zelinsky banging away on the Broadwood without relief has me reading in waltz time.

That it is Count Zelinsky who has been playing waltzes with Lady Coverly, since the present day discussion of Thomasina's death, is confirmed almost immediately when '*the piano music from the next room has doubled its notes and its emotion*' and Thomasina exclaims: 'Four-handed now! Mama is in love with the Count' (110).

When the passionate piano playing '*breaks off suddenly in mid-phrase*', Stoppard demands an '*expressive silence*' and exploits another aural element to further underscore the temporal duality by drawing the audience's attention to '*the distant regular thump of the steam engine which is to be a topic*' (111). Stoppard uses the sound of Mr Noakes' steam pump to great effect to further insinuate the realities of 1812 into the present day. In addition, its beat acts as a rhythmic marker, stepping out the intricately choreographed display of temporal (con)fusion as the occupants of Sidley Park's, both past and present, create then repeat visual and verbal patterns. The '*regular thump*' (111) is present when Lady Croom

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<sup>141</sup> Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*, (Basingstoke:Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 133.

enters from the music room, and when Chloë mirrors her entrance from the opposite direction. The sound of the steam engine, in turn, upsets Lady Croom, who ‘goes to the garden door (and) steps outside’, and Stoppard has Chloë (who is frustrated that Bernard is ‘late’) mirror the action in her search for Gus (111-12). To increase the sense of conflict Stoppard re-introduces the contrary sound of the 1812 piano: ‘*heard again, under the noise of the steam engine*’ (112). When both women have re-entered, Valentine, who has decried the problem of ‘noise’ in research, loudly orders Chloë to ‘stop ordering everyone about’ (112), and Lady Croom, who could be making a meta-theatrical observation about the general staged mayhem but is, ostensibly, commenting on the steam engine, declares: ‘It is an unendurable noise’ (112). Here, the technique of overlapping conversations is made more concrete by the interference of aural elements across the temporal boundaries and expands the humorous double entendre of Stoppard’s text.

Soon after Chloë and Valentine’s departure the aural elements fall silent. ‘*the noise of the steam engine subsides...the piano ceases*’ Except for one short address to Chloë, Hannah remains silent throughout the temporal overlap and is ‘*absorbed*’ in the ‘*garden books*’. What was a chaotic stage of contradictory action and soundscape is now quiet and given over to Lady Croom revealing the truth behind Bernard’s false assumptions: Chater died from a monkey bite and not in a duel with Byron. Still silent, ‘*Hannah sits back in her chair, caught by what she is reading*’ (113). With this pause from the chaotic interaction to date, Stoppard offers a calming eye-of-the-storm effect and Lady Croom’s pronouncement is heard like a revelation across time to Hannah’s simultaneous discovery in the book. Hannah stands and exits, not into the garden but into the aurally neutral space in the opposite direction to the music room. The space becomes exclusively 1812 once more, and, when these characters leave, the alternating temporal pattern seems re-established, moving once more to the present day and the entrance of Bernard: ‘Oh, no – no –...Fucked by a dahlia!’ (121).

When the next aural effect occurs it is piano music, coupled with a ‘*light change to evening*’ (124), and suggests a return to 1812. This temporal setting is immediately confirmed when ‘*Septimus enters with an oil lamp*’. The romantic setting, with the addition of Thomasina’s candlelight, is pervaded by piano music: ‘The Count plays for us, it is God-given!’ (125). However, Thomasina’s passion is rebuffed by Septimus. The piano music, he insists, ‘is too slow for waltzing’ (125). Despite the lighting and the music, he continues to exert control over the interior space, despite having kissed her in the park beyond. Sitting, reading, Stoppard portrays the tutor and his student as the mirror-image of Hannah and

Valentine's earlier research pursuits at the same table. Septimus commands silence and, together, they study their texts.

These 1812 characters are still on stage when Stoppard blurs the temporal boundary once more and the '*music changes to party music from the marquee*' (126). Modern-day characters re-enter to share the stage with those from 1812 and two temporally interwoven conversations about entropy take place. The temporal conflation is further emphasized when Thomasina asks Septimus: 'Is it a waltz now?' and the audience's aural perceptions are contradicted because of the modern musical backdrop (127).

In terms of aural contradiction, Di Benedetto argues that humans 'often rely on our brain's ability to predict a sound and fire off in an expected way rather than to fire in new ways' and that when the unexpected is introduced, it is then that 'we begin to consciously perceive.'<sup>142</sup> In other words, by using aural effects to contradict the temporality of the 1812 text, Stoppard forces the audience to register that something unpredictable has occurred and their natural response is to, consciously, resolve the contradiction. One possible resolution is to accept, in addition to all the other examples of temporal interference which Stoppard has carefully planted throughout *Arcadia*, that the history of Sidley Park, within the doubly inhabited room, is a porous entity. Indeed, Stoppard underscores the possibility for this temporal confusion by instructing that the '*music is still modern*' (127), so that when Thomasina and Septimus do dance it seems to be this music Septimus begrudgingly accepts: 'It will serve' (128). As Stoppard clearly states in his stage directions: '*the waltz lesson, to the music from the marquee, begins*' (129).

Septimus and Thomasina continue their waltz, first '*with the slight awkwardness of a lesson*', then '*freely*', until he '*gives her a final twirl, bringing them to the table, where he bows to her and lights her candlestick*' (129-31). Throughout this first waltz between the two, events from the present day unfold and one by one, Chloë, Valentine and Bernard depart the stage. Bernard leaves via the house and Chloë and Valentine exit into the garden in the direction of the music from the party marquee. Hannah is the only present day character on stage, until the visually contradictory appearance of Gus dressed in Regency attire.

The final sound effect in the play is the piano playing a waltz, and, in the 1993 Samuel French performance copy of *Arcadia*, the final music cue in the Effects Plot reads:

Cue 18                      Hannah pours herself some more wine                      (Page 84)

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<sup>142</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 131.

*Change modern party music to piano music from next room*<sup>143</sup>

However, in the 2009 Faber and Faber paperback edition (without an 'Effects Plot' section), the stage directions in the text do not include the above sound effect cue, and instead read:

*Hannah goes to sit at the table, playing truant from the party. She pours herself more wine. The table contains the geometrical solids, the computer...*

*Gus appears in the doorway. It takes a moment to realize that he is not Lord Augustus, perhaps not until Hannah sees him.* (131).

What is unclear from the Faber and Faber issue but confirmed by the performance script is that Stoppard demands this final music effect cue to continue the established pattern. Each preceding musical shift in this scene has signalled the imminent arrival of a character to contradict the temporal setting. Therefore, although there may be a moment's assumption that it is Lord Augustus, the pattern of contradiction is maintained and the assumption subverted when Hannah recognizes him as Gus, who comes bearing another gift for her.

Having given Hannah the final piece of evidence she needs to complete her research puzzle, Gus '*bows to her...an invitation to dance*' (132). The music heard by the audience is that of the piano playing a waltz and, as their bodies are seen to respond to the music, they repeat the 'awkwardness' first shown by Septimus and Thomasina as they began to dance. With these most specific stage directions Stoppard offers a very visual suggestion of history repeating itself, by having both begin 'awkwardly' (133), and by having both perceived by the audience to be dancing, in tandem, to the same waltz music, which he has established as coming from an unseen piano, in a music room, in the Sidley Park of 1812.

## 2.6 The waltz

The little analysis of aural elements in *Arcadia* which exists deals with the waltz at the end of the final act. The discussion is divided, primarily, between suggested perceptive and emotional responses of the audience and Jerzy Limon's academic analysis of the incongruity of the temporal signalling at the end of the play.<sup>144</sup>

Alison E. Wheatley argues that Stoppard, by including the waltz, with its romantic overtones, is consoling his audience, who have learned that Thomasina is going to die in a fire when the dance is over. By doing so the 'audience is left with an aesthetic consolation: in place of lasting wholeness for Thomasina and Septimus, we have their first and last dance; in

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<sup>143</sup> Stoppard, *Arcadia: A play*, 92.

<sup>144</sup> Jerzy Limon, 'Waltzing in *Arcadia*: a Theatrical Dance in Five Dimensions', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 24.3, 2008, 222-228.

place of true integration of mind and body for Hannah and Gus, we have their tentative first efforts at communion'.<sup>145</sup> In addition, by agreeing to dance, Hannah is moving into a place of emotional discovery, the rewards of which are demonstrated by Thomasina and Septimus dancing 'freely' (131), then 'fluently' (133). Wheatley also suggests a 'possible symbolic or metaphoric reading of the finale', observing that the character Hannah is 'living (her) intellectual heritage at the expense of (her) sexual side but who, by the very last scene (is) at least dancing, dancing becoming a final metaphor in action'.<sup>146</sup> Stoppard's inclusion of the waltz, Wheatley suggests, favours a positive emotional reception by his audience and Wheatley also observes that the waltz resolves some of the pre-existing thematic tensions by bringing together these particular couples:

'Thomasina is getting her first "carnal embrace" with her intellectual soulmate, Septimus, while he may be experiencing his first integration of love with sex. Simultaneously, the possibly autistic but brilliant Gus is attempting to dance with Hannah, who, until this moment, has rejected almost all things carnal in favour of her intellect.'<sup>147</sup>

Further to the idea of the waltz as an image of emotional resolution, Hunter writes:

'Thomasina has settled for a further dance with Septimus, and nothing more. Traditional dance allowed impossible couples their possible meetings, in a gracious and tender mode. And here, as two pairs dance together, the past fluent, the present awkward, the play itself is allowed to end in similar grace and tenderness – though also in extreme poignancy'.<sup>148</sup>

Leach suggests that the audience, far from perceiving two separate time periods may perceive that, while the two pairs (ostensibly from different eras) 'cannot see each other, ... they seem to be speaking to each other all the same, as the implications of Thomasina's discoveries tumble out... The waltzing couples dance in circles past each other, oblivious to each other, and intensely aware of each other, all at once'.<sup>149</sup> He makes the especially pertinent observation as to how the imaginations of the audience might be engaged, given that this 'final scene is the waltz that takes place inside all of us – of our ancestors dancing with our present, of reason dancing with irrationality'.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Wheatley, Alison E. 'Aesthetic Consolation and the Genius of the Place in Stoppard's *Arcadia*', *Mosaic: a Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 37.3 (2004) 171-184; n.page.

<sup>146</sup> Wheatley, 'Aesthetic Consolation', n.page.

<sup>147</sup> Wheatley, 'Aesthetic Consolation', n.page.

<sup>148</sup> Hunter, *Tom Stoppard*, 200.

<sup>149</sup> Leach, 'Arcadia by Tom Stoppard'. n.page.

<sup>150</sup> Leach, 'Arcadia by Tom Stoppard', n.page.

This idea of the two couples being ‘aware of each other’ is heightened through Stoppard’s use of the waltz and its accessible rhythmic pattern, and contributes to the audience perception of the two couples as sharing a co-joined experience. As Di Benedetto claims: ‘music impels us to tap our feet because the mind seeks out patterns in sounds and forecasts the next probable sound’ and ‘that we become fascinated when those patterns are violated, leaving our brain to struggle to find coherence’.<sup>151</sup> I propose that the reason so many seem moved by the magic of this final moment in *Arcadia* is that this ‘struggle to find coherence’ leads the audience to accept that the music they hear is what matches the image of four people dancing, regardless of contradictory temporal spheres.

This idea of resolution is taken to another level when Meisel proposes that the couples dance to a single musical source, which he suggests speaks of creating a theatrical moment of ‘higher logic’<sup>152</sup>, although this is contradicted by Jerzy Limon who claims that Stoppard has ‘two sources of music’ for the couples dancing to the waltz and that this leads to incongruity and only narrowly avoids a sense of dissonance rather than resolution.<sup>153</sup> In his article, ‘The Dance to the Music of Time’, Meisel goes one step further again, and claims that the whole ideal behind theatrical presentation is to appeal to an audience’s sense of ‘a higher logic’. Rather than reduce the play, as Limon seems to be suggesting, to its component parts, Meisel proposes that the final scene in *Arcadia* moves audiences to respond to the impossible and to make connections that are not possible in the logical world beyond the realms of the theatre and its magic:

‘But for the poignant last scene, in a bold stroke of theatre poetry that pays off beyond all reasonable expectations, couples from the two times, blind to each other, are on the stage simultaneously, in the same room, dancing to the same music. This radical break with the premises that have so far governed the play, its rules of representation, comes off as the revelation of another logic, a higher logic perhaps, consonant with thematic concerns, about loss and recurrence in the pattern of things; and iterated algorithms in a ‘geometry of nature’: and how ‘the unpredictable and the predetermined unfold together to make everything the way it is’, which is not a bad description of the progressive form of a play.’<sup>154</sup>

If *Arcadia* can be said to represent a single idea, perhaps it is this, that art may move us beyond the logical into the magical.

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<sup>151</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 131.

<sup>152</sup> Meisel, *How Plays Work*, 22.

<sup>153</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 228.

<sup>154</sup> Meisel, *How Plays Work*, 22.

Limon certainly acknowledges the frisson created by the temporalities of scene seven: 'It would be hard to find a better example of the magic of the theatre.'<sup>155</sup> Part of this 'magic' for Limon occurs when, despite the fact that 'the whole interior is divided temporally', Stoppard allows characters from each era to touch the same physical objects, e.g. the wine glass etc. Limon asserts that this 'indexical function' becomes a signal to the audience, such that the touched object is now 'the dominant sign, transporting, like a time machine, back and forth, all the other objects from one epoch to another.'<sup>156</sup> When it comes to 'the music played in the very last scene', however, Limon proposes that it 'does not fit the overall consistent handling of the stage picture and action, and the complex relationships of the time structures employed.'<sup>157</sup> For Limon, it is important that the factors and objects which signal temporality are 'grounded in a specific time' and he argues that Stoppard contradicts 'certain rules' when 'in the very last scene of the play...the two couples, each belonging to a different time-stream, listen to and dance to music.'<sup>158</sup> Despite both couples being possibly perceived by the audience to be dancing to a single musical effect, Limon insists that this cannot be the case as 'One of these rules is that the acoustic signs from one time-sphere are not heard and simply do not exist in the other'<sup>159</sup>. Limon concludes that Stoppard only 'avoids incongruity' by having Hannah and Gus dance 'awkwardly' (133) and that this signals that they are moving in time to the unheard 'music played from the marquee.'<sup>160</sup>

There is much to be admired with Limon's analysis. However, some of his assertions invite further discussion. In the particular case of scene seven, Limon claims that the 'whole interior is divided temporally'<sup>161</sup> whereas I suggest that the overall impression is not so much one of division but of jam having been stirred into rice pudding. Having introduced the idea of temporal conflation to the audience throughout this scene, Stoppard positions himself at a point of no return. He cannot undo the idea in the audience's imaginations, and thus establishes the basis for the audience's acceptance of the dual waltz.

This also applies to Limon's theory of 'indexical function': that objects can signal temporal relevance by being handled or referred to by characters from a particular time-sphere. Limon admits this function can also occur acoustically: 'a distant sound of cannons being fired' can signal temporality. For him, however, these signals rely on 'ensuing

<sup>155</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 225.

<sup>156</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 225.

<sup>157</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 225.

<sup>158</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 225.

<sup>159</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 225.

<sup>160</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 228.

<sup>161</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 225.

expository dialogue' from 'stage figures'. As previously discussed, throughout the play the present day characters handle physical objects from 1809-1812 as they search for answers to their research questions. However, rather than these shared objects maintaining two indivisible and independent temporalities while they are 'transported' temporally to and fro, I suggest that the familiarity of these objects to both periods weakens audience perceptions of temporal differentiation. In short, the continual interchange across Stoppard's blurred temporal boundary allows the audience to interpret objects as temporally ambiguous.

Supporting this idea is one of Limon's 'certain rules'. He writes: 'through repetition, the reader or spectator is instructed how to 'read' a given scene',<sup>162</sup> and this leads him to the conclusion that music cannot make a 'journey in time' because it is 'set in time that is clearly defined.'<sup>163</sup> The idea of a time as a 'clearly defined' entity is an interesting one as it presupposes a decisiveness foreign to Stoppard, who has revealed himself to be a dualist since his creation of the atemporal opening scene in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. I would argue that the music does not, in fact, need to make a 'journey in time' in the play because Stoppard has done everything within his power as a playwright to create an interwoven spatial time-sphere that is *not* 'clearly defined'. As Matthew D. Wagner observes, present time in a theatrical sense can convey the phenomenon 'temporal "thickness" — the layering of past, present and future.'<sup>164</sup> In *Arcadia*, as previously demonstrated, Stoppard repeatedly blurs the temporal boundaries; the audience witnesses Thomasina's theorizing as she perceives future 'discoveries' beyond her pencil's capacity to calculate. In opposition, they witness the researchers of the present day 'discover' the past. In terms of temporal directions in *Arcadia*, the past is looking to the present day and the present is looking to the past. This pattern, outlined at the start of scene two continues until the point whereby the two temporalities intersect on stage in scene seven through the physical and textual mirroring of the characters. In terms of instructing his audience how to 'read' aural elements in relation to temporal paradoxes, it also seems obvious that much of the play, and, at the very least, the whole of scene seven, is a lesson in how multiplicitous such readings might be.

Despite Stoppard's consistent attempts to conflate the two temporalities, Limon asserts that the final piano music accompanying the waltz is unique because, 'until this moment, whenever one of the groups of figures from one time-sphere was active, it had as its

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<sup>162</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 225.

<sup>163</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 228.

<sup>164</sup> Matthew D. Wagner, *Shakespeare, Theatre, and Time*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 13.



background the music from its own sphere.’<sup>165</sup> This is incorrect. The piano is heard by the audience, in the form of waltzes played by Count Zelinsky, in the music room from early in scene seven, while groups from both time spheres are ‘active’. Moreover, in this same scene, while characters from both time periods weave their way physically and verbally around each other, the ‘*distant regular thump of the steam engine*’ is introduced and then supplemented aurally by the piano: ‘*heard again, under the noise of the steam engine*’ (111-12). Therefore, the narrative disruptions created by having both time periods active at the same time are further emphasized by the temporal dissonance of these contradictory aural elements. If repetition is required for an audience to ‘read’ the signs, then I propose that this is precisely what Stoppard is doing from the start of the scene two.

Another of Limon’s theses is to reject the idea ‘that the tempo of the music in both temporal spheres is exactly the same’, calling this ‘an impossibility’.<sup>166</sup> However, for the 2014 production of *Arcadia* at the Tobacco Factory theatre in Bristol, the composer and sound designer, Dan Jones, wrote the modern day music ‘from the marquee’ in three-four time and matched the tempo to the subsequent three-four waltz of the piano music. What masked the immediate relation was the former sound effect’s less-melodious, synthesized arrangement and speaker distortion. In doing this, Jones observed Stoppard’s direction that the dance should occur in a contradictory temporal setting: a setting made dominant by the identifying aural effect of ‘party music’ while, at the same time, allowing the aural shift to glide across the now-thin temporal divide.

Rather than consider any lack of temporal clarity, Limon’s theorizing sees the idea of shared temporal space as problematic and suggests the solution as ‘two groups of stage figures and two sources of music’. Understanding that this is not Stoppard’s resolve, Limon claims that ‘Stoppard avoids incongruity with the functional relationships already established in the play’ by signalling present day temporality through the hesitant start by Hannah and Gus to their waltz. In his opinion, for this final waltz in *Arcadia* to avoid confusing members of the audience, they must associate ‘awkwardness’ with ‘the music played from the marquee’ (which is no longer heard in the auditorium) and ‘fluency’ with ‘the music we are hearing’<sup>167</sup> – the piano playing. In other words, each couple is signalled acoustically as belonging to a separate defined time-sphere because of the visual contradiction of Hannah and Gus beginning to dance ‘*rather awkwardly*’ to the sound of the 1812 piano, and Thomasina and

<sup>165</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 227.

<sup>166</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 227.

<sup>167</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 228.

Septimus starting to waltz with ‘*the slight awkwardness of a lesson*’ while the music from the present day marquee is heard. Thomasina and Septimus have already progressed in her dance lesson and ‘*continue to dance, ‘fluently*’ (133). What Limon’s theory ignores, however, is the fact that the rapid progress from an awkward start to ‘*Thomasina and Septimus dance*’ (suggesting rapid improvement) to ‘*now waltzing freely*’ (129-31) all occurs against the aural backdrop of the present day. In short, their rapidly, near-fluent waltz is seen by the audience to occur prior to a shift to the piano music from 1812. This begs a question. If Limon’s theory of temporal incongruity rely on the ‘awkwardness’ of the dancers as being the defining signal then, surely, Septimus and Thomasina should remain ‘awkward’ until the music changes to music from their own time-stream. With this in mind, it is far easier to argue that the moment when Hannah and Gus begin to dance ‘awkwardly’ to the piano music, it is Stoppard creating yet another mirror image, by having them repeat the open-ended pattern of the other main couple, Thomasina and Septimus, towards a point of dancing ‘fluently’, and that this mirroring further conflates rather than divides the shared temporal space.

In summary, Limon also states that cross-temporal signalling ‘does not, however, work with music, because it is produced by humans (and) perceived by fictional figures.’<sup>168</sup> A minor contradictory point is that the piano music emanates from the fictional figure of Count Zelinsky in the unseen piano room. More importantly, I challenge Limon’s assertion that the music is restricted to being ‘perceived by fictional figures’. Instead, I propose that Stoppard, as with all his other aural elements, is appealing to his audience. In this case, he offers them the emotional resolution embodied by their shared associations of romance and waltz music. When Gus, appropriately attired, makes a Regency bow’ to Hannah as his invitation to dance (132), it is almost inconceivable that anyone is expecting him to dance in a modern manner befitting the music from the marquee. Audiences are informed by established tradition that music at the end of a play resolves any prior unrequited romance. Audience expectations demand resolution. Regardless of what the ‘fictional figures’ on stage might be perceiving, the audience is expecting romantic resolution and Stoppard cleverly complies. Ambiguous as the temporalities may be, it is the music and accompanying dance which resonate.

## 2.7 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has shown how Stoppard’s uses of aural effects in *Arcadia* emphasize the play’s many themes and help to define its structure. The music of the piano not only defines the two time periods in the play by the difference in Thomasina and Gus’ performance styles, but

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<sup>168</sup> Limon, *Waltzing in Arcadia*, 228.

underscores the evolving scientific discoveries and research of 1809 and the present day. Other particular sound effects contribute further in highlighting the many themes Stoppard explores in the play: order versus chaos, life and death, entropy or hope.

I have argued, primarily, that Stoppard has written a play which makes temporal boundaries more and more ambiguous as the narrative progresses so that the play's two historical eras: the early nineteenth century and the present day are conflated into a singular shared moment of resolution in the final moments. As I have demonstrated, in keeping with his theme of scientific endeavor, Stoppard continually questions the idea of an exclusive temporal space and creates inter-temporal patterns using techniques such as textual repetition, shared objects, and mirror characters in each period.

What has become evident from this investigation into the use of aural elements in *Arcadia* is how little has been written on the subject. With the exception of the waltz in the final scene, there is a dearth of analysis as to the roles played by sound effects and music performed at other junctures in the play. Compared to the plays discussed in chapter one of this thesis, it is obvious that the uses of aural effects in *Arcadia* are, for the most part, designed to complement the realistic setting of this fiction.

The exception to this realism is the waltz and I have included observations from a number of theorists to date who discuss the multiple receptions of this final musical moment. What all the theorists agree upon is that the waltz plays a decisive role in elevating the play to something they equate with the 'magic' of the theatre. Audiences, they argue, perceive the waltz as having a unifying effect by resolving the romantic narratives and acting as a consolation for Thomasina's death. The use of waltz music, through its rhythmic accessibility and its cultural association to romance is also understood as the most fitting of aural elements to accompany the dancers.

I have, however, challenged theorist Jerzy Limon in his assertions that the waltz music at the end of the play is an exception to the other temporal obfuscations employed by Stoppard. While the majority of Limon's ideas around time generating components are legitimate, I have demonstrated that his argument is debatable, based as it is on restrictive and, in one case, incorrect, suppositions. Moreover, rather than focusing on the perception of the fictional figures on stage, I have suggested that it is the aural perception of the audience that matters. Stoppard is, after all, creating such temporal anomalies for their enjoyment and much of the play's magic and comedy lies in the perceived possibility of the two historic periods co-existing. Indeed, rather than singling out the final waltz as unique and

incongruous, I have shown it to be merely the final, though memorable, link in a long orchestrated chain of manoeuvres used by Stoppard, who, it has been shown, when faced with the threat of having to be definitive, prefers to leave things open to interpretation.

## Chapter Three: *Rock 'n' Roll*

‘Breathless and transfixed the Mole stopped rowing as the liquid run of that glad piping broke on him like a wave, caught him up, and possessed him utterly. He saw the tears on his comrade's cheeks, and bowed his head and understood. For a space they hung there, brushed by the purple loose-strife that fringed the bank; then the clear imperious summons that marched hand-in-hand with the intoxicating melody imposed its will on Mole, and mechanically he bent to his oars again. And the light grew steadily stronger, but no birds sang as they were wont to do at the approach of dawn; and but for the heavenly music all was marvellously still.’

From Chapter 7: ‘The Piper at the Gates of Dawn’<sup>169</sup>

### 3.1 Chapter introduction

The following chapter will consider the uses of aural elements, including silence, in Tom Stoppard’s 2006 play *Rock 'n' Roll*. As well as investigating the selective choices of inter-scenic music to define the chronological progression, this chapter will also explore multiple readings of the ways in which aural elements are used thematically, structurally, and to create mood and atmosphere. In addition, I will demonstrate that the (overall, minimal) inclusion of environmental sound in Stoppard’s plays generally, and particularly in *Rock 'n' Roll*, is an effective tool in garnering emotional responses from the audience.

Significantly, the very first impression Stoppard offers the audience of this play is an aural one. Before a single word is uttered, Stoppard calls for music as the bewitching introduction to the initial, bucolic scene. Within a garden setting, at dusk, the Piper’s instrument ‘is a single reed, like a penny whistle. He plays for Esme, who is sixteen, a flower-child of the period: 1968.’<sup>170</sup> What Stoppard allows for, before the Piper sings, is for the audience to experience a merely musical moment. With this, he invites them to react, not necessarily intellectually but to the visceral emotions created by the sound from the pipe. The lighting is soft, and what is being staged emulates the tradition of the love serenade in the form of Esme as the ‘flower-child’ and the figure of the Piper (15). Whatever the listener might be expecting from a play with the title *Rock 'n' Roll*, I suggest that it is not this gentle acoustic introduction in which love and pastoral paganism are piped into an expectant auditorium. Those listening are being asked to perceive the Piper’s playing, and subsequent singing of *Golden Hair*, as engaging Esme emotionally: an idea supported by the play’s first,

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<sup>169</sup> Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willow*, ed. Peter Hunt (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 75.

<sup>170</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Rock 'n' Roll* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 15. Unless otherwise stated all references to the play in this chapter are to this edition.

thrilled outburst, when she relates to Jan what she has experienced: 'Did you see him?...Pan!...He played on his pipe and sang to me' (15-16).

Having established this link between mythology and the idyll of pastoral England, Stoppard goes on to construct a performance narrative with real, historical events as its backdrop, with the action alternating between England and Czechoslovakia in the predominantly cold war period from 1968 to 1990. With its over-arching theme of political oppression versus freedom of expression, the playwright also compares political and artistic casualties in the two countries through an exploration of myth and legend, classical poetry and love. This exposition is set against two backdrops: the first of an England growing indifferent to the frisson of cultural and political change, and the second: the political struggle for greater freedom within the emerging rock and roll scene of a Soviet bloc nation. Through the figures of English Max and Czech Jan, Stoppard also explores the themes of the individual's loss of faith and the individual made political. In addition, through a variety of relationships within the play, Stoppard explores love in many of its guises, most especially in the relationships between Max and Eleanor, and Esme and Jan.

The playwright's long-term director-collaborator, Trevor Nunn, observes that Stoppard is 'to some extent auto-biographical and one of the auto-biographical ingredients is that he, himself, is a crazy, obsessive rock 'n' roll fan. Tom has got a huge collection of rock 'n' roll records...the vinyls as well as the CDs...he's anorak enough to be interested in who was playing on what track.'<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, in addition to having written a play with rock and roll devotees like himself in mind, Stoppard never underestimates his audience's intellect and exploits these 'anorak' tendencies by using particularly specific aural elements to refine his exploration of the play's multiple themes, and to create a structure which offers, paradoxically, the possibilities of both linear and circular analyses of the play's chronology. This idea of multiple themes is also borne out by the varying ways in which the playwright selects music to facilitate the creation of various specific theatrical atmospheres including, but not restricted to, those of Soviet-style social and political oppression. In addition to these musical inclusions, Stoppard offers a sparse use of diegetic sound effects to create stage realities along with the non-diegetic effects of sudden silences to prompt emotional and imaginative engagement. In other words, the way in which aural elements are used to coincide with and contrast themes is more complex than merely matching a song and its lyrics to a theme. Even though this occurs, music and other sound effects fulfill additional roles.

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<sup>171</sup> Nunn, Interview. n.page.

The differentiation between Stoppard's choices of diegetic and non-diegetic music, silence and other sound effects in the play is essential to the understanding of the various roles aural elements perform in *Rock 'n' Roll*. Diegesis can be narrowly defined as 'a narrative; a statement of the case'<sup>172</sup>, although its broader definition has become more closely associated with film studies rather than with performance literature within the theatrical tradition. In terms of film, Elsie M. Walker identifies the effect of narrative sounds as emanating from the 'impact of [...] music in relation to the actors' voices as well as other diegetic aural elements including the punctuation of laughter and of silence (in various forms).'<sup>173</sup> Although the analysis of diegetic sound has traditionally been used in the analysis of the role(s) of music in the arena of film, it is possible to argue that it is also relevant to the analysis of narrative within performance literature and the role(s) such sounds play in both creating and reinforcing a play's narrative. The arenas of theatre and film both share the possibility of including music as a diegetic device, whereby the music is fixed within the narrative and therefore part of the stage reality of the characters. By way of contrast, a production may include the overlaying of non-diegetic music, that is, music unheard within the reality of the play. The latter is what Walker, with her focus on film, calls 'metacinematic musical commentaries or "interventions" [which] reinforce the combination of realism and artifice'.<sup>174</sup>

The use of both diegetic and non-diegetic music can also be observed in Stoppard's earlier plays such as *Travesties*, to reinforce this sense of 'artifice'. The use of Beethoven's 'Appassionata' as an immediate revelation in Stoppard's *Travesties*<sup>175</sup> helps to humanize the character of Lenin but also plays non-diegetically and helps the audience to distance themselves once more into the artifice, and to question the recollections of an ageing ex-diplomat. The decision to create diegetic and/or non-diegetic aural elements is one made, primarily, by the playwright. Therefore, assuming one subscribes to the accepted theatrical wisdom that a good play contains nothing which does not move the narrative forward, thereby adding to its trajectory towards a (non-)resolution, one may accept that Stoppard has such a motive for including these elements in his plays. Whether it is the piano in *Arcadia* or an absurdist song and dance routine in *Travesties*, there is reason to assume that a consummate playwright like Stoppard includes aural elements with good, and often multiple, reasons.

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<sup>172</sup> Oxford English Dictionary.

<<https://vpn2.uio.no/+CSCO+00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E6272712E70627A++/view/Entry/52402?redirectedFrom=diegesis#eid>> Web. 16 Feb. 2014.

<sup>173</sup> Elsie M. Walker, 'Image/Music/Shakespeare' *Literature/Film Quarterly*. 36.2 (2008), 82.

<sup>174</sup> Walker, 'Image/Music/Shakespeare', 82.

<sup>175</sup> Stoppard, *Travesties*, 89.

Structurally, Stoppard's shifting use of both diegetic and non-diegetic music occurs throughout *Rock 'n' Roll* and creates an aural time-line along which the personal and historical events unfold. Recognizing that recorded music has the ability to exist beyond its initial temporal emergence and, therefore, does not necessarily define the temporal setting of a play: (i.e. a recording from 1967 can be played at any time after that first recorded performance), Stoppard supports the aural positioning of the scenes' chronology by the inclusion of other modes of referencing, such as costuming, spoken language and/or historic and textual referencing. For example; at the very beginning of the play, the haunting sound of the pipe adds to the establishment of the narrative's temporal space, assisted by the vision and spoken text of Esme in the garden, evoking the title of the first Pink Floyd album, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* from August 1967. Here, the music is diegetic as the character can hear it within the context of the play. The audience knows this because of Esme's interaction with the Piper and because she mentions him to Jan. Stoppard then further underscores the temporal frame after the blackout at the end of the scene, with Dylan's 1967 song 'I'll Be Your Baby Tonight' from the album *John Wesley Harding* from December 1967 (18).

The initiation of the opening scene's temporal setting is a diegetic exception to the general rule in *Rock 'n' Roll*. Other temporal shifts are instigated through the use of non-diegetic aural elements, in a manner that might be said to reflect Stoppard's evolving skills as a screenwriter. Throughout the remainder of the play, Stoppard provides aural landscapes for the chronological changes by using 'smash cuts'. In his instructions for 'SCENE CHANGES', Stoppard writes:

'I use the phrase 'smash cut' to mean that all the cues for sound and light are called as one cue, so that one state (e.g., music in blackout) jumps into a complete state (e.g., silence and daylight) without fades or builds.' (10)

This technique is used to great effect to interrupt the narrative flow. Thus, it can be seen as creating a clear separation between the preceding action, by indicating the end of the scene and signalling a chronological shift in the narrative. When the audience first encounters Jan in Prague, the smash cut to this scene offers silence as the aural element. At the end of the preceding scene, however, the Rolling Stone's cover of 'It's All Over Now' has 'merged' into a version by the Czech rock group, The Plastic People of the Universe. This is indicative of a temporal shift, with the Czech group's version being from their first album of live recordings from 1969 to 1972. Stoppard may well be acknowledging the ability of many of his



contemporaries in the audience to understand the minutiae of the history of music enough to perceive this shift in temporal setting.

However, what may be more significant about the shift to the Plastic People of the Universe at this point in the play, is the way Stoppard is using music to define a change of physical location as opposed to merely one of time. The play's chronological progress continues to be defined in this way up to, and including, the start of the final scene at the end of Act One. For the non-diegetic, inter-scenic music prior to the smash cut into this scene Stoppard selects Pink Floyd's 1975 track, '*Welcome to the Machine*' (63). However, the chronology is disrupted at the end of the scene (and the first act), by the inclusion of a track from a ten-year-old Beach Boys LP from 1966. It is as if Stoppard wishes to encapsulate the entire chronological period of this act, making the temporal shift at the beginning of Act Two all the more noticeable. After the blackout at the beginning of the first scene in Act Two, this shift to 1987 is made apparent by Stoppard's choice of '*I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*' by U2' (69).

While the first two scenes in Act Two take place, respectively, in Cambridge and Prague in 1987, the majority of the act is set in 1990, with this temporal shift occurring at the beginning of scene thirteen. With the exception of the track from U2's 1987 album *The Joshua Tree*, which opens the second act, what Stoppard does with music in this act is the antithesis of Act One. Whereas each scene in the first act is introduced by music suited chronologically to the temporal narrative, what Stoppard does in the second act is introduce music that subverts the chronology. One example of this occurs in scene twelve, in which Nigel meets Jan in Prague to give him some cassette tapes. Nigel reacts to '*the sound of John Lennon singing 'Bring It On Home' on a tinny cassette player*' and comments 'Uh...Czech hippies!' (84). This version is still playing in the inter-scenic space prior to the '*Smash cut to silence and sunshine – Summer 1990*' (84-85). Instead of helping to inform a progressive temporal shift, it offers a sense of reminiscence, and there is a similar sense of returning to past with the inter-scenic choice of *Vera* from the 1979 Pink Floyd album, *The Wall* as the choice of music to lead into the final scene (116).

In addition to the diegetic/non-diegetic division, this analysis is also concerned with the audience's aural reception of the play and the ways in which Stoppard's choices of such elements might either confirm or confound expectations. The way in which aural elements are used can, according to Di Benedetto, shift the emotional responses within an audience, depending on the type of aural element involved; the more abrupt and confronting a sound,

the more likely that ‘a warning signal will produce...a quickening of the heart rate, a tensing of the muscle and a readiness to move... [c]ertain sounds can evoke anger, others pleasure.’<sup>176</sup> Therefore, the choices of aural elements and their influence on the ways in which themes are presented in *Rock ‘n’ Roll* may also be seen as demonstrating other techniques at the playwright’s disposal with which he may manipulate the audience’s emotional reception.

In his chapter on aural landscapes, Di Benedetto also discusses how ‘sound that is generated by voice or musical instruments and environmental sound... triggers visceral sensations, which in turn evoke mood in the context of performance.’<sup>177</sup> The introduction of sound and the way it creates an aural landscape can occur in a variety of ways: as a reconfirmation of an audience’s expectation or as a contradiction to those expectations. Di Benedetto further suggests conscious intervention by playwrights such as Stoppard when they include sound within their plays: ‘As we shape a soundscape within performance, we are providing stimuli to keep the audience attuned to the action transpiring on the stage’ or that ‘the sounds can divert and direct our attention away from action as well.’<sup>178</sup> In addition, as Bruce McConachie suggests, audiences enter the world of artifice more easily if they are engaged positively on an emotional level: ‘spectators are looking for good partners in play, the underlying emotions of theatrical engagement.’<sup>179</sup> Stoppard’s use of aural elements, therefore, helps provide additional positive pathways along which the ‘spectators’ may emotionally approach or embrace the fiction being presented on stage.

### 3.2 Themes

In what is a densely-layered narrative, Stoppard uses aural elements, for the most part music from the relevant historical periods in the play, to further identify and express the play’s various themes. Throughout much of the play, the playwright’s choice of music can be said to underscore the theme of societal change, particularly his selection of music that was, in its time, breaking new ground. The music includes tracks by (among others) the Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, the Velvet Underground and the Plastic People of the Universe.

As part of the promotional campaign for the New York production of *Rock ‘n’ Roll* in 2007, Stoppard was interviewed for the American television show *Theater Talk*. One of the interviewers commented upon the play’s references to Syd Barrett: a founding member of

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<sup>176</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 127.

<sup>177</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 125.

<sup>178</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 128.

<sup>179</sup> Bruce McConachie, *Engaging audiences: a cognitive approach to spectating in the theatre* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 45.

Pink Floyd who is, for the older Esme, the Piper of her youth, in the opening scene. The interviewer suggests to Stoppard that Barrett represents ‘Western decadence.’<sup>180</sup> What seems paramount for her is to highlight that the over-arching purpose of the play is as a critique of the Soviet oppression of Czechoslovakia. Stoppard’s response makes clear that this analysis of *Rock ‘n’ Roll* oversimplifies the thematic complexities within the play, stressing that it is far more than a mere social and political commentary on East versus West. While acknowledging the significant role rock and roll music played in providing a focal point for disenfranchised citizens, and the subsequent demise of the pro-Soviet political base in Czechoslovakia, Stoppard adds that there were also many other thematic components, including poetry, myth, love and loss. However, he also downplays expanding on these themes by suggesting that it is ‘not the moment to explain how all of these are a perfect fit... and inevitably lead into each other...because it might appear it’s a kind-of weird ragbag of Tom Stoppard’s current interests forced into a jelly mould.’<sup>181</sup> Not for the first time, Stoppard’s self-deprecation obscures the artistry of his craft, and his metaphor of a ‘weird ragbag of... current interests forced into a jelly mould’ acts as a distraction from the skill with which he dove-tails the constituent thematic elements into a coherent whole. Despite the many examples of rock and roll music being linked thematically to the most obvious binary of individual freedom versus political oppression, there are other themes which need to be considered. This complex play of ideas can also be said to explore the importance of legend and myth, the role of the individual and their passions and the collective desire for the creation change and, not least, the experience of love.

### 3.2.1 Love and loss

It is possible that audience responses to the themes of love and loss are deepened beyond the staged spoken word by the inclusion of both diegetic and non-diegetic music throughout the play. Bruce McConachie argues that audiences engage by ‘projecting themselves into the emotional life of an actor/character (and) simulate the experiences of actor/characters in their own minds’<sup>182</sup> and that by ‘[e]mbodying other’s (sic) emotions produces emotions in us.’<sup>183</sup> What is most interesting is that this effect is not restricted to the visual act or spoken word but that audiences ‘can catch emotions through sounds as well.’<sup>184</sup> Therefore, what Stoppard can

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<sup>180</sup> Susan Haskins, *Theater Talk* (New York: CUNY TV / PBS, 4 Jan. 2008), n. page.

<sup>181</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Theater Talk* (New York: CUNY TV / PBS, 4 Jan. 2008), n. page.

<sup>182</sup> McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 66.

<sup>183</sup> McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 67.

<sup>184</sup> McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 68.

also be understood as doing with this initial and all-important first impression is to appeal to his audience's emotions through music, asking them to identify with the theme of love, embodied as it is by the young couple and supported by the soundscape.

*Rock 'n' Roll* begins with Esme in her parents' garden, transfixed, listening to music. When Jan arrives in the garden the Piper retreats and the music stops. This sudden cessation of lyrical sound removes from the audience the emotional promise of romance between Esme and the Piper, and may be seen as yet another of Stoppard's false starts. True to his technique of wrong-footing his audience, however, the scene may also be considered as re-set with the arrival of Jan, Stoppard introducing him as Pan's replacement: the myth made corporeal. The continuing emotional connection between Jan and Esme is demonstrated by her sending him records and cassettes throughout the play, and the song *Golden Hair* is also used to underscore Jan's emotional loss when he plays it and replays it, three years on, in Prague.

Stoppard does not leave the complexities of love and loss there but also places the song in a very different emotional (and political) space by having Max react angrily to the track: 'I never heard anything so pathetic' (35). For him, such music is anathema to his beliefs and what begins as a simple refrain to love, becomes associated with both personal loss and political disgust, reminding the audience of the complex interplay of music and themes. When, in the second act, Alice enthuses to Jan over the 'new Barrett album...out-takes, worth having' and Esme tells him 'It's got a different take of Golden Hair', it suggests a return to Esme and Jan's romance in that initial aural moment. Stoppard seems to infer that emotions shared when hearing 'Golden Hair' in 1968 might be rekindled and even improved upon with age, just like the 1993 reissue: 'Without the overdubs.' (98).

The initial use of the disruptive smash cut technique occurs at the end of the opening scene as the Bob Dylan song *I'll Be Your Baby Tonight* plays for the audience, unheard by the characters on stage. Stoppard seems to be adding this non-diegetical aural element, another acoustic song, for the benefit of the audience and their imaginations, in suggesting that the possibility for romance between Esme and Jan extends into the otherwise unspecified inter-scenic space; the audience is being offered associations as to whether or not Esme and Jan are making love. It is also possible that the music reasserts the more positive emotions associated with love and assists the audience in carrying this positivity into the second scene.

In the second scene, the passionate discussion between Eleanor and Max about her mastectomy and their love-making, speaks less of romantic fancy and more of established hard-worn love. Stoppard introduces diegetic aural elements to strengthen this sense of shared

space and familiar dynamics. A doorbell rings, a door slams and young Esme's music is heard in the background. When Esme's music becomes too loud for the tutorial lesson, '*Eleanor excuses herself and goes into the house. Esme's music cuts out.*' (22). As with all of Stoppard's work, there is never just one thing going on. Here, in addition to the themes of love and politics, he introduces the idea of loss: Eleanor's cancer treatment and Jan's return to Prague. Stoppard has the character Esme play '*the Rolling Stones*' '*High Tide and Green Grass*' album, and this is the first time electric guitar-backed rock 'n' roll music is heard by the audience (21). While Stoppard is not specific as to a particular song, the lyrics of either of the first two tracks *Satisfaction* or *This Could Be The Last Time* fit the scene. More specifically for this thesis, however, the faster rhythms and hard-edged electric guitar strings on both these tracks help create the sense of tension in the scene, foreshadowing the impatience and stress felt by the terminally-ill Eleanor.

In this second scene, tutor Eleanor and her student Gillian discuss Sappho's use of the word '*glukupikron*' in Fragment 130, which Gillian translates as 'bitter-sweet', only to be corrected by Eleanor: 'why not 'sweet-bitter'?' (22). Through this textual choice, Stoppard has the character of Eleanor explore the connection between Eros, the Greek mythological god of love, lust and folk music and the idea of '*amachanon*': Eros as an '*un-machine, non-machine...spirit*' (23). Eleanor as the Sapphic scholar, appearing so soon after her daughter's association with 'Pan', is Stoppard's way of making the connection, as many have before him, of Pan as the earthy manifestation of Eros, a spirited and disruptive force who, despite his sweet music creates discord among the nymphs. The scene ends with a blackout and 'It's All Over Now' by the Rolling Stones. This further emphasizes the idea of disruption and suggests, in addition to Eleanor's obvious distress that there 'isn't *time*...!' (23), her impending death from cancer. This sense of disruption continues to be asserted in the shift from a familiar version of the song into a Czech version by the Plastic People of the Universe, at the end of the scene.

If the character Esme is defined romantically by music and night, then Eleanor is defined more pragmatically by literature and day. When Eleanor, who has channeled the spirit of a literary Eros throughout the first act, demands that Max bring his 'grieving soul or nothing' to her funeral, he cannot oblige and they sink together into a companionable grief (63). In the Pink Floyd song that follows, the human voices and the acoustic guitars are all lessened by the intense production values of the synthesizers, and seem to echo Stoppard's portrayal of Eleanor's as a diminished individual struggling against overwhelming odds.

Despite the smash cut from ‘*Welcome to the Machine*’ (63) into the final scene in the first act, one can argue that the reverberations of the underlying beat and the highly overproduced synthesized minor key melody have persisted. The smash cut, and the sudden aural void introduce the audience to the most emblematic losses of the play: ‘*Jan’s records have been smashed and scatters among torn-up album covers*’ (63) The opposite of his and Eleanor’s reverence of spirit is the threat of the machine of state, represented here by the destruction of Jan’s record collections. Stoppard makes this sense of loss more apparent by having Jan play his only remaining album: a Beach Boy’s LP from 1966. In terms of the collection of music and the abundance of hope at the start of the play in 1967, the lost decade is made visually apparent on stage to the ironic, cheery strains of the one remaining record.

In addition to the exploration of personal loss through his characters, it is possible to observe loss in broader thematic brushstrokes. The once sprightly, radical Syd Barrett is now an ageing local recluse called Roger, who enjoys gardening. Stoppard reduces Sappho’s passions to dry, text-book analysis by intellectual academics, and Esme’s frustrated attempts at kitchen-table translation seem a long way from the vital young woman surrounded by music and myth. There is a sense of Stoppard defining an England that has lost its vitality, a point he underscores in the second act scenes set in Cambridge by excluding any emotive, aural stimulation from them. By way of contrast, the reunited lovers Jan and Esme re-emerge in a boisterous and revitalized Prague (Eros is alive and well). Stoppard’s introduction of the diegetic ‘*[B]ar room noise and music (to) wipe out the (preceding) scene*’ (118) suggests that the split scene with Lenka and Deidre’s intellectual investigation of Sapphic text is to impress upon the audience ‘that great Pan is dead’ in an indifferent England, compared to the vibrant, ecstatic love of the hard-fought-for, collective freedom in Czechoslovakia. Despite the intellectual complexity of the women’s work, Stoppard distracts his audience by having ‘*The Beatles*’ ‘*Rock and Roll Music*’ play offstage on a tinny cassette player (and) fade in and then out’ during their discussion (117). Love is alive and freedom is well but its home is somewhere far from Albion, and represented by the ‘*pre-concert crowd noise*’ in a Strahov stadium no longer dedicated to the propaganda of the Soviet era (119).

### **3.2.2 Oppression or freedom of expression: political and artistic casualties**

The audience is introduced at the start of the play to the sounds and image of the Piper with his ‘*wild dark hair*’, and Esme’s silent adoration. She is ‘*sixteen, a flower child of the period: 1968*’ (15). She is listening and watching his performance on the garden wall. Stoppard sets a scene which offers a sense of characters on the cusp of social (and sexual) revolution. The

music choices throughout the first act move apace with the evolving socio-political timeline and subsequent events in Czechoslovakia, but it is the actual individual choices of aural elements which are significant, especially considering the range of music Stoppard has to choose from, and the decisions he makes. One example is Stoppard's choice of two different examples of acoustic music to top and tail the opening scene, rather than the choice of the electrified music more typically associated with rock and roll. It is possible to conclude from this that the playwright wishes to express a sense of simplicity and innocence: to frame the scene musically, as he does with his lighting direction '*as though giving off light*' (15). The debate which follows this arguably idyllic scene-setting is anything but simple; Dubcek's social experiment in Czechoslovakia, otherwise known as the Prague Spring, is over. This is made clear through Max's belligerent attack on Jan: 'your bloody Dubcek did this, not the Soviets' (17). Yet, rather than end the scene with a heavier rock and roll musical choice to match Max's aggression, Stoppard calls in the script for another acoustic track: Bob Dylan's '*I'll Be Your Baby Tonight*' (18). What Stoppard seems to be setting up, with these initial musical choices is a complexity typical to his plays, suggesting the co-existence of interweaving themes through the juxtaposition of acoustic music and political argument.

Both of the songs framing this scene are in major keys, carrying what Powell refers to as music which 'sounds more self-confident and generally happier than music composed in minor keys.'<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, the sound levels are lower and unlike 'loud music (which) saturates the auditory system, causing neurons to fire at their maximum rate.'<sup>186</sup> These choices, therefore, offer greater potential for a positive audience response, primed as they may be by 'self-confident', yet calm, acoustic music and potentially comforted by overtures from the vision of a pipe-playing mythological god of love. Arguably, rather than getting caught up in the immediacy of Max's intense political diatribe, the audience tunes in, instead, to Jan's departure to see Esme in her room, and the theme of love, re-enforced as it is by the reversion to the calm of acoustic music and suggestive lyrics.

Beyond this initial political spat between communist Max and apolitical Jan, the themes of power and oppression are embodied in four different ways with soundscapes to match. There is the interrogator who occupies an interior space particularly defined by silence. There are the plainclothes police who subvert the otherwise banal sound effect of a flushing toilet into a threat. There is the intermediary Milan who appears as the state's go-

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<sup>185</sup> Powell, *How Music Works*, 144.

<sup>186</sup> Daniel Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music: Understanding a Human Obsession* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008), 71.

between in two exterior spaces: the first devoid of aural elements and the second notable for its background music. Finally, there are the soundscapes of Jan and his friends in Prague and their responses to the oppression of the Czechoslovakian state apparatus.

In introducing these aural spaces, Stoppard uses, as previously discussed, the ‘smash cut’: a distinctly harsh aural and lighting technique. While the technique is also used to introduce daylight exterior scenes, the choice of smash cuts, combined with the soundscapes mentioned above, assists Stoppard in defining the oppressive power of the communist state. The threats to non-compliant citizens continue to be highlighted by Stoppard in his use of this technique in the aural introductions to the Prague-based scenes six, seven and eight. The aural effects of smash cuts can be understood as designed to elicit discomfort from audience members: discomfort brought about by the unsettling effects of the unpredictable endings to the inter-scenic music. Even scene five, which does not smash cut to silence, introduces an exterior space in which Max is ‘*muffled into anonymity*’ (32), and helps promote the sense of things not being what they seem.

In contrast to the opening scene which begins with music and has Dylan’s ‘*I’ll Be Your Baby Tonight*’ as an aural transition, the play’s second scene is introduced with a smash cut to ‘*Eleanor already speaking*’ (18). By using the smash cut, without fades or builds, between each scene, Stoppard abruptly displaces the audience’s attention, often exaggerating the effect of the dialogue or silence which follows. Thus, the audience is moved abruptly from a group of characters expressing peace, love and passionate political beliefs to a new, less-assured conversation. The smash cut introduces an uncertain Eleanor. A stranger has appeared and, unsure of the man’s name, she refers to an unknown ‘he’: ‘He said to tell you Jan wasn’t coming back, he asked for his things’ (19). The man is Milan, the Czech state operative who has recruited both Max and Jan as informants. With this single smash cut Stoppard introduces Eleanor’s confusion, Jan’s departure to an uncertain future, an ill-defined stranger with links to Czechoslovakia and a less-assured Max, faced as he is with emotions well beyond the rational parameters of his political truth. The smash cut technique therefore, from music to a lesser aural soundscape, not only disrupts the emotional promise of the first scene but creates aural disruption which, apart from shifting the action temporally, helps to build the situational and textual suspense.

The suspense felt by the audience can also be said to increase in the blackout between scenes two and three. Stoppard includes the Rolling Stones’ song; *It’s All Over Now* which ‘*merges into a segment of the same song as recorded in English by the Plastic People of the*



*Universe*: a Czech Rock 'n' Roll band the audience becomes familiar with during the course of the play (23). With this merging comes an aural recognition of the music changing from the more famous and familiar Rolling Stones track to that of a non-British band. In doing so, Stoppard assists the conscious transportation of the audience from Cambridge to an alien place. The following smash cut, once again, repeats the pattern of aural displacement between scenes. Not only has the music transitioned into something less recognizable but the audience senses that they have left the promise of semi-rural England.

The smash cut to the Plastics' soundtrack introduces scene three and creates the effect of near-complete environmental silence. Offering a threatening sense of the unknown, Stoppard presents the audience's first aural experience of silence in tandem with the Interrogator, the representative of the state apparatus of oppression. Here, Stoppard's creation of interior silence persists throughout the scene. There is only the spoken word in an otherwise soundless room and all references to music are merely verbal. Following on from the first two scenes with their accompanying diegetic soundscapes, this exclusion of aural elements emphasizes the underlying threat of the dialogue and expands the sense of oppression. Where the preceding music expressed liberation and spirit, the 'office interior' is designed to oppress by being something of an aural void.

In this scene, the Interrogator defines Jan's music as 'socially negative' (24) and it becomes obvious that Jan has not performed the role expected of him by the state apparatus, in reporting back to them events and people that might have been of potential interest. Jan's position in Prague is up for negotiation, as are his records: 'Excuse me, but when will I get my records back?' (27). With the adverbial 'when', Stoppard manages to indicate that Jan has little doubt of the inevitability of his records being returned. He is still certain that he will be allowed to keep his collection of 'socially negative music' (24). The Interrogator's response is more ambiguous: 'That's what we're here to talk about.' (27). Jan's right to play the music he is passionate about can no longer be taken as a given in Czechoslovakia and everything is up for negotiation, at the state's behest. For the character of Jan, the on-going musical choices made by Stoppard, in Act One, further define the theme of state control and eventually reveal Jan as a casualty of systematic oppression.

When the aural void of the third scene ends, there is a blackout and the audience hears '*I'm Waiting for the Man*' by the Velvet Underground.' (27). This time the smash cut is only lighting. What was non-diegetic music is transformed into a diegetic expression of Jan's individual freedom. He has been allowed to keep his record collection; he is in his apartment

and his '*record player is playing the continuation of 'I'm Waiting for the Man'.*' (28). This 'continuation' of the music, as opposed to a smash cut, creates a connection rather than a disruption, allowing for a sense of things having normalized. Along with Jan, the audience leaves the threatening silence behind, able instead to share in his enjoyment in the personal freedom of listening to music in his home. Stoppard allows for this minor victory which, one might argue, increases the negative emotional effect when the audience comes to understand the extent of the regime's oppressive techniques.

In the first act, another aural element is used repeatedly to parallel the emerging theme of political oppression in Czechoslovakia: '*A lavatory flushes*' (28). The sense of the everyday, far removed from the constraints of the Interrogator's office, is exemplified by this use of environmental noise. The first time this sound effect is heard precedes the appearance of Jan's friend: '*Ferdinand... enters*', and the sound effect adds to the contrast between the intimidating starkness of the Interrogator's office by conveying a sense of everyday normality to Jan's home environment: The next time the audience registers this sound effect is at the start of scene six, and the sound is quickly followed by a discussion about political protest and Jan's discomfort at being asked to sign a petition against the regime (41). As a contrast, a similar effect to the office interior in scene three is achieved in scene seven with a smash cut to silence. This heralds Jan's first reaction against state oppression, his willingness to take action with the creation of his own petition, as a result of an underground concert being attacked by the state police (44). In this scene, void of a soundscape, Stoppard has Jan introduce the ideas of secret police, of musicians being arrested as dissidents, and compare the idea of indifference to authority with paganism. Stoppard then follows Jan's impassioned speech with the Rolling Stones' song *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll* (48), an upbeat, rhythm and blues song. Yet, if the audience has been uplifted by the speech and the subsequent music, the smash cut '*to daylight and silence*' in scene eight signals a return to an emotional space embodying anything other than comfort and ease as the banality of daily state oppression is made evident. What began as a normalizing effect is becoming associated with the oppression of the individual:

*'The lavatory flushes. A man comes out of the bathroom, doing up his flies. He has a leather jacket, the jacket of choice for secret policemen*

*Policeman (smirks) My aim was off. Apologies.'* (49)

When the final 'lavatory flush' sound effect is used in scene ten, it brings with it the sense of defeat. The sound is embodied by the sight of the destruction of Jan's record collection. The

apparatus of state has demonstrated its power, to the point whereby Jan is physically sick in the bathroom: '*He comes in, wiping his mouth on the back of his wrists*' (64).

In addition to demonstrating the everyday oppression of an individual character like Jan, Stoppard also questions who it is who rules, by comparing political and artistic casualties. In a thematic parallel in *Rock 'n' Roll*, Stoppard sets up the reverence shown by dissidents for Dubcek and the Prague Spring against the reverential pursuits of Esme and Alice to honour the artistry of Pink Floyd's 'deposed' front man: Syd Barrett. In addition to naming the emotive Piper character as Syd Barrett, Stoppard includes some of Barrett's better-known music in the play, and honours the aged Barrett through the character of Alice. There is also Stoppard's consistent inclusion of music deemed unsuitable by the communist regime, and this marries the idea of rock and roll to liberalist England and personal freedom. While the Cambridge characters are free to pursue their intellectual and emotional paths, Jan, the Plastic People of the Universe, their manager Jirous and all those who attend underground concerts are 'traitors' to the communist cause.

At the end of *Rock 'n' Roll*, Stoppard uses soundscapes to encapsulate the demise of the communist regime and the re-emergence of artistic expression and individual self-determination in Czechoslovakia. In a direct reference to the past, Stoppard uses Pink Floyd's song *Vera*, with its text and mellow orchestration for strings, as a lyrical and aural reference to the period before the Cold War. In addition to Pink Floyd's music, Stoppard underscores this idea of the past aurally by including an early low fidelity version of '*The Beatles 'Rock and Roll Music*' being played '*on a tinny cassette player*' when Jan returns to a non-oppressive Prague and he and Esme visit the iconic 'Lennon Wall' (117). What the playwright demonstrates so succinctly with the aural quality of the 'tinny cassette player' is how far behind Czechoslovakia remains. Yet, all is not lost and Stoppard demonstrates this by increasing the occurrence and quality of his soundscapes. From the 'tinny' sounds of the cassette, he shifts quickly to a vibrant bar-room scene, with a cover version of '*I'm Waiting For The Man*' by the Plastic People' (118). Where it was previously associated with the Interrogator and the silence of the interrogation room, it is now background to a celebration of individuals revelling; a once-outlawed band is being heard in public. Building to the climax, Stoppard demolishes Jan's earlier ironic disbelief at the idea of a rock concert in the former Soviet Strahov stadium. In the final moments of the play it is a high fidelity recording from '*the Rolling Stones live album 'No Security*'" which brings the assembled characters to their feet to celebrate their release from political oppression (117-19).

### 3.2.3 From the powerless individual to collective strength

It is possible to suggest that another of the play's main themes is the isolation of the individual and the power of the collective, and that Stoppard, in addition to the spoken word, embeds aural elements within the text to help express this contrast. For instance, Jan's individual isolation in Prague is highlighted by the use of silence in his dealings with the authorities. Furthermore, in Act One, Jan does not enjoy music in Prague in the company of others, further demonstrating his isolation. When the audience meets Jan's activist writer friend Ferdinand, Stoppard almost immediately exploits the selection of the background music to make obvious their differing interests, both musically and with regard to their ideas about political action. When Jan asks Ferdinand if he would prefer listening to 'Fugs or Doors?', Ferdinand shows his indifference: 'I don't care.' (29), repeating the very sentiments that Jan expresses about political protest. Then, when Ferdinand tries discussing censorship, Jan effectively resorts to censorship techniques himself by increasing the volume on his record player: '*A blast of music obliterates Ferdinand*' (30). Thus, Stoppard creates and maintains the idea that music is not a revolutionary tool for Jan but an instrument of personal pleasure. When Ferdinand understands that Jan won't sign his petition he: '*walks out without a word*' (31). Stoppard then has Jan play '*Break On Through*' by the Doors, with its distinctly psychedelic feel (32). This adds to the growing sense of changing musical styles but also identifies the Jan's individualism and limited interest in social revolution.

The next time Jan plays music in another's presence is after Max delivers a Syd Barrett album from Esme. What was sung by the Piper/Barrett in the garden in 1968 is now on Barrett's debut solo album *The Madcap Laughs* from 1970. Time has passed and Jan plays Barrett's love song, which triggers Max's furious outburst in which he derides Jan for his continuing political naivety despite living in Czechoslovakia. Jan '*stops the record*' (36). When this scene splits into dual interior/exterior staging, Jan remains inside his apartment playing the music, which further defines his solitude, bringing with it the aural and remembered associations from the original garden scene in Cambridge. In the simultaneously-staged exterior space, the music fades as the comrades Max and Milan meet outside Jan's apartment. Max's perfunctory assessment is that Jan has 'learned nothing' and, when the two men leave, their pragmatic ideological discussion is replaced by a resurgence of the interior music: music which reaffirms the youthful naivety of the opening scene (40).

Stoppard, however, discomposes the scene almost immediately, by replacing the diegetic *Golden Hair*, in a major key melody with the non-diegetic '*Astronomy Domine*' by

*Pink Floyd, picking up thirty seconds in* (40). This track, off their debut album '*Piper at the Gates of Dawn*' from 1968, is also written and performed by Syd Barrett. However, what the playwright confronts his audience with, here, is the antithesis of the Esme's present to Jan: sixty seconds of a drone-like melody backed by a discordant guitar riff emphasized by shifting minor keys. This music counteracts the audience's calmer contemplation in which they have heard and seen Jan listen to Esme's melodious present, and reasserts the more revolutionary aspects of Barrett ground-breaking musical talent. This non-diegetic inter-scenic soundscape suggests a shift from the comfort of easy-listening to a more challenging emotional state, further represented by Jan's raised voice at the beginning of the next scene.

Stoppard ends the first act with two thematically contrastive musical soundscapes. Scene ten is split between the disarrayed interior of Jan's room in 1976 and a Prague exterior in summer 1977. At the start of the scene, in '*November 1976*', Jan returns from prison to find his entire record collection destroyed: '*Jan's records have been smashed and scattered among torn-up album covers*' (63). Stoppard intimates that music of itself will never be powerful enough as an expression of sought-after freedoms; Jan playing his records in his room is not going to change the political status quo. Ferdinand is present and offers Jan scant consolation by returning the Beach Boys' 1966 album *Pet Sounds* which he had borrowed. It is now the last surviving album of Jan's collection and, in the light of his entire collection lying shattered, might represent the tragic irony of him being back where he was a decade earlier, before the Prague Spring and subsequent Soviet invasion in August 1968. That Ferdinand chose this album from the entire collection might also be Stoppard associating the character's innocence and his optimistic belief in the power of the collective to bring about constructive change. Notably, Jan's instrument for revolution: his record player, is unharmed and he puts the LP on and plays the upbeat opening track '*Wouldn't It Be Nice*'. Significantly, he does this almost immediately after signing, for the first time, one of Ferdinand's petitions (68). The association is precise. The moment Jan begins to take part in a collective protest action Stoppard floods the auditorium with a song with intricate, complex, yet resolving, four and five-part harmonies. Despite the aural complexities within the song, the resolving major chords and the upbeat rhythm allow the audience to perceive the verses, bridges and coda as positive and satisfying. The first act ends with the voices of many offering resolution.

The exterior setting of this scene '*has its own music, which is cheerful but not loud, like a hurdy-gurdy being played in the street*' and it underscores the discussion between the state-operative Milan and Max, who the audience now understand has been an informer (65).

It is a duplicitous choice of music. On the one hand it brings with it historical associations of the tsarist Russian and subsequent Soviet persecutions of hurdy-gurdy players, accused as they were of itinerancy and begging. On the other hand, it speaks to the idea of happier, more optimistic times a decade earlier, bringing with it associations to the 1968 Donovan song 'Hurdy Gurdy Man'. In addition, it is possible to interpret the instrument being heard, in public, once again, on the streets of Prague, as a sign of a less-oppressive Soviet-style regime.

In addition, at the end of the first act, Stoppard begins to diminish the distance and isolation between individuals. Max and Jan's argument about communism is not resolved but Max pleads to Milan for leniency. Jan realizes his need to be part of a growing movement for change and signs Charter 77 after years of rejecting Ferdinand's petitions. The sense of isolation which was increased by the silences of the first act and their link to the oppressive apparatus of the state is contrasted by the collective soundscapes of Act Two. Significantly, the theme of evolving collective change is expressed by Stoppard's use of music and other aural elements, such as sound effects of familiar activities and public spaces, to further symbolize the individual's social interaction on a societal level.

Individual isolation remains, however, and is clearly represented at the start of the second act, in which the audience hears '*I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*' by U2' before a smash cut, this time, to the garden '*as before*' (69). Once again, Esme is there, although, this time, neither the Piper nor Jan is present. Her memories are individual and her sense of longing is reinforced by Stoppard's choice of Pink Floyd's '*Wish You Were Here*' at the end of the scene with its thematically obvious lyrics (78).

The first diegetic aural element in the second act occurs when Nigel, in Prague, hears '*the sound of John Lennon singing 'Bring It On Home' on a tinny cassette player*' and responds 'Uh...Czech hippies!' (84). This is the first instance of a reference to diegetic music inferring collectivism. More tellingly, the idea of collective strength grows more familiar in the postprandial Cambridge scene when the playwright creates the shared interaction between the numerous on-stage characters: '*three conversations going on simultaneously with some energy...Little or nothing intelligible emerges from the babble*' (105). Despite this, the sense of community is at its strongest with the inclusion of the aural elements of the final scene in the play, creating as they do an overwhelming sense of collective engagement. Stoppard's use of the '*pre-concert crowd noise from the first track of the Rolling Stones live album 'No Security*' is a prime example of noise in which the collective emotional experience can be transferred onto a smaller representative group, in this case *Jan, Esme, Ferdinand and*

*unknown others at the Rolling Stones concert*' (119). With a cast of at least eleven but no more than eighteen actors, this sense of the collective cannot create a sense of a stadium crowd. Only through his introduction of the aural effect of assembled humanity on a vast scale: a live recording of a Rolling Stones concert, does Stoppard managed to convey the electric 'reality' of the event. The '*crowd noise changes when the band appears*' and '*everyone stands up*' (119). The 'pre-concert crowd noise' allows for the aural immersion of the audience with the 'noise' acting as a conduit to each individual audience member's physical register; the 'change' in the 'crowd noise' incites the recognizable pleasure of expectancy in the moments before a rock concert begins: '*The first guitar chords slash through the noise*' (119). No-one is alone at this point. The on-stage characters and the audience share the all-embracing soundscape as a collective and individual celebration.

### 3.3 Structure

In terms of structure, Stoppard uses both diegetic and non-diegetic music to assist the geophysical positioning of the play's scenes in, respectively, a garden and home interior in Cambridge and various locations in Prague. After the blackout at the end of the second scene, Stoppard calls for '*It's All Over now*' by the Rolling Stones' and asks that it '*quickly merges into a segment of the same song as recorded in English by the Plastic People of the Universe on the album 'Muz bez usi*' (23). The diegetic music played by Esme earlier in the scene has been silenced by Eleanor, so the main role of this non-diegetic 'cover' version can be seen as a segue in which the audience is transported to somewhere other than England, in this case Czechoslovakia: a geo-cultural change assisted by the obvious shifts in the production quality of the music and the singer's English pronunciation. In the interior/exterior split scene between Jan/Max and Max/Milan, the interior incorporates sounds emanating from a record player while the exterior is provided with the street music of a hurdy-gurdy player. Aural elements are also intertwined at the end of the second act to both delineate and merge the geographical positioning in the split scene between Lenka and her student Deidre in Cambridge, and Esme, Jan, and others in Prague. This final scene in the play is set in 1990 and starts with a smash cut to Esme and Jan in Prague. By identifying Prague with the Beatles' song and other subsequent aural elements, Stoppard is then able to use the 'fade in then out' technique as a referential link to Cambridge and the studious silence of Lenka and Deidre's Sapphic studies. When the action shifts once more from Cambridge to Prague, Stoppard has the diegetic aural elements of '*[B]ar room noise and music wipe out the scene*' in Cambridge, as the action emerges in Prague: '*The music is 'I'm Waiting for the Man' by*

*the Plastic People...The music and the noise remain as background*' (118). In this final scene, each of the physical spaces in Prague, has its own soundscape and the contrast with the intimate discussion in Cambridge is made all the more physically distinct when the play ends using '*the pre-concert noise from the first track of the Rolling Stones live album 'No Security*' (119), recreating the 1990 Rolling Stones concert in the Strahov stadium in Prague.

In addition to physical location, and in terms of plot structure, *Rock 'n' Roll* is much more than a single story-line play about politics. In an interview with the US television show Theater Talk, Stoppard is asked why he has not included the changes that had taken place in Czechoslovakia after 1990. In his response, the playwright expands on the multiplicity of the various stories:

'There's the story which is the political social context ... and that's the narrative, but, ... there is always a story about the things which abide ... love being an important one... the story of the things that are truly permanent is the one that is telling the play what it's really about...telling the writer what it's really about... it's a bit weird to say that but it's one way to look at it. The play decided that it was not going to go beyond 1990 because, actually, whatever I thought it was, it's really a love story with a big social political context.'<sup>187</sup>

This observation is borne out at the end of the play when the lovers are together in a newly-freed Prague. Stoppard ends the play with a familiar, yet new aural effect: the highly amplified opening chords from an electric guitar. Esme's hopes for 'peace and love' for Jan (17), have completed the revolution begun in the first scene and, rather than the muted tones of a confined Cambridge garden, Stoppard offers the celebratory soundscape of Prague in 1990 reinforced by '*pre-concert crowd noise*' from an open-air Rolling Stones concert (119).

This acknowledgment of *Rock 'n' Roll* as, primarily, a love story is also recalled by Stoppard from a conversation with a man who had seen the New York production the previous evening:

'...at the end, when Jan and Esme got together, I was in tears and I turned to my wife and said 'You see, every story is a love story' ... that man had it right. There is a love story in the play, and whatever I felt about a narrative that should include all this stuff I've just been talking about, once the two: the lovers were together...the play... it refused to go...it was over.'<sup>188</sup>

In addition to suggesting that the play, rather than the playwright, 'decided' when it was complete, Stoppard also waxes lyrical, if possibly somewhat disingenuously, about not

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<sup>187</sup> Stoppard, *Theater talk*, n. page.

<sup>188</sup> Stoppard, *Theater talk*. n. page.



writing to make an impression, claiming: ‘it doesn’t interest me in the slightest. The last thing a writer thinks about is ‘what sort of an impression am I making here?’ You write the only play you are capable of writing at that moment.’<sup>189</sup> The interviewer suggests that Stoppard must surely be aware of the structural requirements and technicalities in creating something which ‘works’, so that the play communicates what one wants it to communicate. Stoppard concedes, reflecting on his inclusion of Eleanor and Max’s discussion about her cancer: ‘Yes, there’s a slither of ice there. You’re thinking...’is this actually going to work?’ I wrote the first act of *Rock ‘n’ Roll* without a scene ... which really is very important to the play...and I thought...this isn’t going to quite deliver...and the moment I found what to do and wrote that scene...that was okay.’<sup>190</sup> Therefore, while maintaining the idea of a play writing itself, the author admits to considering the structural necessities which might rivet or divert an audience.

In terms of aural components within performance, Di Benedetto suggests that individuals, as the constituent parts of an audience, assist the comprehension of these components by their innate reception of any performance. This is because human hearing ‘functions as an alert system. There are brain cells in the mid-brain that only respond to the introduction of a sound, and others that only respond to the switching off of the sound, i.e., a change...These cells allow the ear to respond to acoustic change - we adjust to constant sound, and we note change immediately.’<sup>191</sup> With his inclusion of inter-scenic music which, for the most part, is juxtaposed with silencing smash cuts, Stoppard is constantly engaging and re-engaging his audience’s attention and shifting it in terms of temporality, geography, themes and mood.

From the beginning of the play, the audience engages in a chronological narrative which is reconfirmed through hearing the U2 song *I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For* (69), which shifts their temporal perception to a point twenty years on from the play’s opening scene. However, despite having moved his audience aurally into 1987 and beyond, Stoppard then confronts them with a potentially contradictory image of what could be the characters of Eleanor and Esme from the play’s opening moments. This momentary confusion relies on familiar visual components and the seemingly contradictory aural element.

Throughout *Rock ‘n’ Roll* Stoppard uses this idea of circularity, and social, though not necessarily political, revolution. As well as expressing this circularity textually by exploring philosophies of socio-political change, he has characters reminisce, and demonstrate a

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<sup>189</sup> Stoppard, *Theater talk*, n. page.

<sup>190</sup> Stoppard, *Theater talk*, n. page.

<sup>191</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 127.

continuum of physical and familial traits, for example: the similarities between Esme and her daughter Alice and their shared interest and defense of an ageing Syd Barrett. To help strengthen textual connections and create visceral relationships between the past and the present, Stoppard uses various aural effects, and music in particular, to suggest the past as a place that may be emotionally revisited, but not regained.

One especially poignant example of this occurs at the start of the first and second act. Both open in the same Cambridge garden, at night, with Esme present. In the first, she is a '*flower-child of the period. 1968*' and her '*flowing garment, her long golden hair*' are dimly lit (15). In the second, she is alone, and '*little more than a shadow*', and Stoppard has us understand the passage of time upon the entrance of '*Alice...like Esme when young*' (69). The playwright exploits the majority of these aural elements to reconnect to the past, as he constructs it in act one, after establishing the second act's time frame as post-1987. This idea of unfinished business is also implicit in the song's text, with its text of loss and longing, and it further assists in creating the idea of connections between the past to the present, and of the past as a place that can be revisited, if not regained.

The idea of circularity can also be observed in the way Stoppard structures the play around the sounds and images of LP records revolving. Sounds and their associated themes are suggested to the audience's mind by having the character Jan play them throughout the first act. The definition of 'revolution' as 'an act of moving in a circular course or around some point'<sup>192</sup> is borne out by the structure Stoppard offers through the romantic course of two of his main characters, Esme and Jan. While they are not the only characters in *Rock 'n' Roll* for whom music plays a significant role, the exchange of music between the two characters offers a structural continuum throughout the play. As the only one of the Cambridge-based characters in the first act for whom music represents emotional and social change, Esme uses the other Cambridge characters to act as couriers of the records and tapes which she and Jan exchange during the course of their separation, maintaining not only an on-going exchange but, eventually, acting as a resolution of the love story hinted at in the opening scene. By the end of the play, it is the characters Esme and Jan who can be said to have come 'full circle'. Both are seen at their happiest when they are listening to music and the lack of diegetic soundscapes when the character of adult Esme is present on stage changes upon Jan's reappearance and continues until, and, suggestively, beyond, the play's finale.

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<sup>192</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*

<[https://vpn2.uio.no/+CSCO+00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E6272712E70627A++/search?searchType=dictionary&q=revolution&\\_searchBtn=Search](https://vpn2.uio.no/+CSCO+00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E6272712E70627A++/search?searchType=dictionary&q=revolution&_searchBtn=Search)> 16 Feb. 2014.

This circular structure is also used by Stoppard at the ending to Act One, whereby the pre-interval audience is left with the image of Jan clearing away the detritus of his demolished record collection to the ironic strains of the Beach Boys' tune *Wouldn't It Be Nice* (68). As this scene is set post-1975, it is possible that Stoppard uses this earlier rock and roll song as a link back to the beginning of the play and Jan's innocence. The positive assumptions about being able to exist within the limits set by the state, expressed by Jan to Ferdinand, and in his meeting with the Interrogator, have long since been demolished. A decade of defeat at the hands of the authorities is represented by the shattered vinyl shards of Jan's entire record collection; the revolution of 'socially negative music' (24) has been circumvented.

Another interpretation of this scene might be that Jan's obsession with rock and roll has stunted his personal, social evolution and that Stoppard exposes how the supposedly 'new ground' of his music collection might indeed be making him stagnate socially. Although his record collection is extensive, he has obvious personal parameters as to the extent of his musical taste. Later, in the second act, when he is presented with Alice's choice of music, he demonstrates his lack of enthusiasm: '(slightly surprised) Uh, Madonna...and Queen...' (80). The destruction of his collection, therefore, not only demonstrates the destruction of his musical passion, but acts as a release by making him finally move beyond his comfort zone.

In terms of politics, there is a structural revolution suggested in the second act reunion and reconciliation of the characters Jan and Max, who, as student and mentor, experience on-going political alienation in the first act. Stoppard's adherence throughout the play to chronologically-appropriate music and his 'anorak' knowledge of rock and roll music suggest his use the original 1986 vinyl version of 'Don't Cry by Guns 'n' Roses' (104), rather than either of the two 1991 album versions. In contrast to the latter version with its heightened production values, wind effects and sounds of a low-flying helicopter, the 1986 version is primarily guitar, drums and voice, and offers a simpler, slower version of this ballad. The particular rhythm and sound and production values of this version are also reminiscent of Pink Floyd's 'Wish You Were Here' and create aural associations to the ballad which follows Esme's reminiscences of her own youth in scene eleven.

Further examples of these structural reflections in the second act include Esme trying to emulate the first act scholarship of her now-deceased mother Eleanor, a scholarship inherent in the grand-daughter Alice. The inclusion of Alice as the Sappho 'scholar' teaching her mother and Stephen as her politically-astute boyfriend repeat the traits of the Eleanor and Max characters. Stoppard's creation of the character of Alice, with her mother's passion for

music and a particular, sympathetic interest in Syd Barrett, can also be seen as a fusion between the generations thereby representing the continual revolution of the cycle that, despite having come full circle for Esme and Jan by the end of the play, will continue to revolve further. So, while there is the possibility of reconnection, the audience is also aware that the characters have moved on, and understand, possibly, that one may never truly return to the point of departure, because each revolution also contributes a forward motion.

This paradox of a revolution never returning to the exact same place is, perhaps, expressed most significantly by comparing the music of the Piper which opens the play, and the live recording which ends it: the Rolling Stones in concert. While both can be said to represent rock and roll, by ending the play with the sound of a high-fidelity live concert, Stoppard seems to suggest that the Rolling Stones convey triumphalism, as opposed to Barrett's soft lyricism which invites contemplation.

### 3.4 Mood

Resonant and dissonant atmospheres are greatly enhanced by Stoppard's choices of aural elements in *Rock 'n' Roll*. Music played acoustically is heard in scenes associated with romance and a sense of liberation. To create a comforting sense of the familiar, Stoppard uses non-musical aural elements, such as off-stage sound effects in Cambridge, dinner party chatter, and the friendly background hubbub of a lively pub in Prague. When music is silenced it signals authority, and an atmosphere of threat is often created by suspense-inducing silence at the start of scenes involving political tension and state oppression. Street music and low fidelity recordings transport the listener to less-familiar territory; and the audience shares the excitement of the play's emotionally-inclusive climax through the soundscape of a Rolling Stones concert.

Suggesting that we think of the language of theatre as including more than the spoken word, Di Benedetto writes that 'theatre that makes use of these sounds captures our attention and has the potential to evoke emotion.'<sup>193</sup> Supporting this idea of audience expectations and the creation of emotional parameters, he also states that we 'are familiar with noise being used as a sound effect to create a sense of mimesis in a play but it can also be used for an embodied effect as a means of creating an atmosphere or as a means of conveying a mood or feeling.'<sup>194</sup> Stoppard's mastery of the technique of the spoken word is recognized but I suggest that his use of music and other sounds add to the theatrical mood and 'capture our attention' all the

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<sup>193</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 125.

<sup>194</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 129.

more, thereby heightening the emotions perceived by the audiences experiencing *Rock 'n' Roll*.

While many of these aural elements are intra-scenic, Stoppard also makes significant use of the inter-scenic 'smash cut' to (re-)formulate atmosphere. Winkler states that Stoppard, known for his mastery in wrong-footing his audience, has a firm grasp on the value of such aural techniques as yet another weapon in his arsenal:

'Music and song are thus important instruments in Stoppard's dislocation technique. Abrupt changes in content and in presentation styles, from serious argument to sung passages or dance sequences, help to achieve his intended effect of total comic disruption and refutation. Starting with techniques derived from Beckett, Stoppard develops his own special brand of comic disorientation. Audience reliance on theatrical habit and consistency is undermined.'<sup>195</sup>

Furthermore, while the shifts in atmosphere brought about by the various aural elements support Winkler's assertions, the visceral effects in *Rock 'n' Roll*, are generally perceived as more sinister than 'comic disorientation'. Therefore, the moods that 'music and song' help create and underscore in this play also elicit a broader range of moods than the aural effects of Stoppard's earlier works.

The consistent and significant use of the smash cut as a 'dislocation technique' bears out Winkler's assertion. In addition to the previously discussed uses of the smash cut to signal chronological progression and to offer thematic exposition, it also operates, in many instances, as a mood shifter. In many instances, occurring in the blackout space between scenes, two juxtaposed aural elements such as music and silence, provide the necessary contrast to have an attention-grabbing effect on the audience's emotions. The smash cuts, therefore, as well as shifting mood and atmosphere, also assist with the creation and building of suspense because of their unforeseeable occurrence.

Emotional engagement by the audience is further explained by Di Benedetto as neurological functions which allow aural elements (other than the spoken word) to incite emotional reactions within an audience prior to processes of intellectualization. Di Benedetto claims that when aural messages 'finally reach the cerebral cortex, they are processed and interpreted into whatever it may be, such as raindrops, musical notes, or the telephone ring.'<sup>196</sup> However, he also suggests that prior to this interpretative stage, hearing 'functions as

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<sup>195</sup> Winkler, *The Function of Song in Contemporary British Drama*, 250.

<sup>196</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 127.

an alert system.’<sup>197</sup> Therefore, sounds may, at this level of warning, create physical reactions which lead to direct emotional responses. He cites Peter Alberti who explains how ‘a warning signal will produce...a quickening of the heart rate, a tensing of the muscle and a readiness to move...Certain sounds can evoke anger, others pleasure... sensations produced by hearing are blended into the body mechanism in the central nervous system...’<sup>198</sup> His observations include the idea that ‘[O]ur bodies prime for action when sound vibrations are perceived.’<sup>199</sup> With these ideas in mind, it is possible to suppose that similar reactions may occur when silence suddenly falls and the ‘sound vibrations’ that have so immediately primed our bodies are dispersed. If sound can create a physical fear, might not the disappearance of this sound evoke relief, or other reactions? If one is comforted the sudden cessation of this comforting vibration cause a sense of unease, and, conversely, if ill-at-ease from a suspenseful silence, the introduction of familiar soundscape can offer a sense of relief. In short, I suggest that the presence of aural elements and any subsequent, immediate, induced silence have the potential to play a fundamental role in creating emotional responses, both positive and negative, within the audience, independent of, and in addition to, the spoken language of a play.

Although the very title of the play title: *Rock 'n' Roll*, might lead some in the audience to expect a brash and loud musical start, Stoppard contradicts any such thoughts by presenting an idyllic scene with mythological reference to Pan. The auditorium is dark, the audience has fallen silent, the stage is in blackout and then: ‘*The Piper is heard*’ (15). Here, in the opening scene, the stage directions offer the one example in the entire play in which lighting: ‘*night in the garden*’, is not introduced by a smash cut (15). There is none of the amplification or boisterousness often associated with rock and roll music, and any confrontation of social mores is pacific rather than belligerent. Regardless of what the listener was expecting, it is possible to suggest that it was not this: a gentle start in which mythology and love are piped into an expectant auditorium. In other words, Stoppard creates an acoustic introduction at cross purposes with the expectations of his title, lulling the audience into a false sense of security. Without words, immediate reactions from audience members are not necessarily intellectual but are, as Di Benedetto claims, visceral emotions instigated by the pipe music. Therefore, the playwright’s choice of inviting, uncomplicated pipe music as the play’s initial aural stimulation can be seen as offering a more alluring soundscape than the potentially more confrontational guitar chords that end *Rock 'n' Roll*. Along with the pastoral vision of the

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<sup>197</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 127.

<sup>198</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 127.

<sup>199</sup> Di Benedetto, *Provocation of the Senses*, 129.

Piper, and Esme telling Jan that she may have just seen the embodiment of Pan, the pipe music can be understood as guiding the audience emotionally towards a subsequent, positive intellectual reception of pastoral bliss, mythological god, and love.

Contrary to this, another reading of audience reception might be that this lyrical evocation and the youthful manifestation of Syd Barrett in the form of the Piper evoke a contrary atmosphere of uncertainty and expectation among the audience. Helping to position the play in 1968, the music indicates to the audience that the tumultuous Cold War period lies ahead in the play's narrative, replete with social and political upheaval and infers an impending time of significant challenges for the play's characters. The reception of audience members experienced in Stoppard's tendency to create two-tier openings, might also consciously attempt to resist the allure of Pan's pipes, knowing full well the playwright's tendency to thwart expectations.

In the 'real' world of the play, the opening scene ends in silence with Max's stinging retort to Jan: 'fuck off back to Prague. I'm sorry about the tanks' (18). During the blackout, however, before the start of scene two, the auditorium is filled with the sounds of '*I'll Be Your Baby Tonight*' by Bob Dylan.' (18). Having been primed by the acoustic simplicity of the reed pipe whistle, Stoppard's choice of this track can be perceived as a continuation of the established emotional positivity, with its unhurried rhythm and blues beat and laid-back harmonica introduction. Left in the dark between scenes, the audience's earlier emotional response to the pipes is likely restored by this return to acoustic calm, as the lyrics move them to the intellectual and imaginative possibility of Jan and Esme being together.

Such imaginings are curtailed by the first smash cut to '*bright day...Max there and Eleanor already speaking*' (18). Although the space is the same, Stoppard initially defines the Cambridge garden, aurally, as alluring by night and pragmatic by day. However, having created an atmosphere of romantic and sexual promise with the help of Pan's pipes at the start of Act One, he uses a smash cut as contrast. The second act is introduced with the non-diegetic '*I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*' by U2' and ends, abruptly, in silence. Esme is alone, in the dark. With no other aural effect to dispel the lyrics of the preceding song, or the effect of her solitude in the shadows, her disappointment is palpable: 'Is this where it's all going...lumpy faces and thickening bodies in forgettable clothes...we were all beautiful then, blazing with beauty' (70). The scene stands in stark contrast to the atmosphere the audience shares with her at the end of the play, encompassed as both are by the liberating thrill of a rock concert about to begin.

Throughout the play a sense of familial security is created by both off-stage sound effects and music. In scene two, sound effects are used to contrast the romance of the opening scene to pragmatism. A student arrives for her tutorial: '*Doorbell*' (20). Even when Eleanor returns to the garden mildly frustrated, and despite her manner becoming increasingly fraught, the discomfiting tragedy of her cancer is, nonetheless, familiar. In scene nine, Stoppard includes: '*Indoors, a five-year-old starts calling for 'Granny'*' (52), '*The child is heard from within. A car is heard tooting*' (59), and: '*In the house, there are sounds of departure, the door closing*' (60). At the later dinner party, although Stoppard writes that '*little or nothing intelligible emerges from the babble*' at the dining room table, he also states '*there is some laughter*' (104-105), and it is clear the soundscape should impart a sense of bonhomie.

The audience loses this sense of security when Stoppard creates aural shifts from music to silence. In their most benign form, Stoppard uses such shifts as an expression of familiar authority and of loss: '*Eleanor...goes into the house...Esme's music cuts out*' (22). It is another matter entirely when the merged inter-scenic music smash cuts to silence for the start of the next scene. The atmosphere is no longer familial and the sudden lack of any soundscape, combined with the impersonal surroundings of the office and the authoritative demeanor of the Interrogator, offers the audience an oppressive banality.

Not all the play's discomfiting atmospheres, however, are created by silence. In scene four, a visual smash cut introduces the audience to Jan in Prague, surrounded by his record collection. He is happily '*busying himself, putting beer on the table*' (28). Here, 'Jan's record player is playing the continuation of *I'm Waiting for the Man*' by the Velvet Underground' (27). The previous non-diegetic music associated with the interrogation scene is carried over. On the one hand, Stoppard diminishes the sense of an immediate threat by normalizing the music by association to Jan's home. On the other, the aural inference is that Jan's home will, from now on, be associated with the Interrogator's threatening authority.

Scene four, in which Jan shows the extent of his political naivety, ends with an angry Ferdinand exiting: '*Jan restarts the record: 'Break On Through' by the Doors*' (31). The tendency of the major keys to express positivity is heightened by the speed and unrelenting upbeat rhythm of the song and Stoppard continues it in the inter-scenic break. For those who know their history, the irony is clear, but, in keeping with the music, the Jan who re-appears after the smash cut, at the start of scene five, is still full of life and hope, having just snubbed his nose at authority by supporting a band of 'undesirable elements' (33). The mood changes when '*Max turns ugly*' and when he has left, Jan puts on '*Golden Hair*'. When Max enters the



exterior space, he meets Milan, ‘*who may have been visible waiting and watching throughout the scene*’ (40). The music has faded once more, as the authorities reappear in Jan’s life and his ebullience is felt, by those watching, to be misplaced.

In *Rock ‘n’ Roll*, the mood of the play reaches its lowest ebb with the shuffling and physically shattered Eleanor ‘*hits bottom and stays there*’ (63). The accessible familiarity earlier in the scene has been replaced by intense spoken emotion. The normalizing off-stage sound effects ended with the ‘sounds of departure, the door closing’ and the scene ends with Eleanor’s physical collapse. There is a blackout and ‘*Welcome to the Machine*’ by Pink Floyd” (63) with its ironic associations to Pan, spirit and Eleanor’s passion for the ‘unmachine’. Heard before the smash cut to scene ten, Stoppard is specific in his directions that it begin ‘*three minutes and fifty seconds in*’ (63). Therefore, the images of the crumpled body of Eleanor and the complete destruction of Jan’s record collection are intrinsically linked by the music. Whereas the preceding inter-scenic track offered the easy-going rough production values and feel-good acoustics of ‘*Chinatown Shuffle*’ by the Grateful Dead’ (51), ‘Welcome to the Machine’ makes a very different aural impression with its high production values, meter and time signature variations, sustained chords and high-pitched, drone-like synthesizers. In addition to the visual drama on stage, Stoppard has chosen the music as a dynamic aural shift; the music experienced by the audience in the blackout between the two images introduces, despite its acoustic guitars, a sense of the inhuman with its taut synthetic and other-worldly tones.

The second act, despite its solemn start, uses the smash cut to less dramatic effect, coupled as it is (with the exception of the start of the act) with daylight and (almost entirely) exterior settings. Only prior to the final smash cut, does Stoppard return the audience to this state of solemnity by including ‘*Vera*’ by Pink Floyd’ (116). With its introductory soundscape of war and bombs dropping from the skies, the melody is sung by a single voice backed alternately by simple guitar or the nostalgia-inducing sweep of a full orchestra. The lyrical sentiment of this song: ‘*that we would meet again*’, along with the slow pace and mellow orchestration are to relax and reminisce to, yet also conjure up disquieting associations to war and destruction.

The final scene, as with many Stoppard plays, can be said to be an atmospheric ‘jelly-mould’. There is a growing sense of ebullience which begins with Esme and Jan’s visit to the Lennon Wall in Prague, to the accompaniment of ‘*the Beatles*’ ‘*Rock and Roll Music*” (117) which builds until the final soundscape. Within the ebullience, however, there are other more

somber moments. As they leave the wall, which commemorates the murdered John Lennon, the music ‘fades for Deidre’, who, in Cambridge, declares: ‘Great Pan is dead!’ (117). Not everyone has survived the passage to this joyful moment, and those who bear scars. I suggest, however, that all is momentarily forgotten when ‘*the crowd noise changes...the band appear (and) everyone stands up*’ (119).

### 3.5 Chapter conclusion

In this final chapter, I have shown how Stoppard provides a sense of chronological narrative structure, in the first act, through the inclusion of historically-specific inter-scenic music. In addition, I have also explored how the author, in the second act, uses music to create a somewhat paradoxical circular reference and a sense of nostalgic reminiscence within the dominant linear chronology. I have demonstrated how the author builds on sentiments introduced at the start of the second act with the U2 song ‘I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For’ (69), and the ways in which he furthers the idea of retrospective musical reference by interspersing the latter period of the second act with low-fidelity recordings of music associated with the earlier now-historic period of the preceding act. Moreover, I have suggested that Stoppard strengthens this sense of narrative circularity with the encapsulation of the entire ten-year period of the first act by having the scene end with a Beach Boys hit from 1966, returning the audience full circle to the opening scene. In addition to analyzing the use of music to create temporal shifts, I have also demonstrated how Stoppard has aural elements indicate location change, such as his use of an original Rolling Stones recording merging into a cover version to indicate the transition from Britain to Czechoslovakia.

I have also investigated the ways in which the playwright has aural elements emphasize the play’s many themes, among them freedom versus oppression, the individual versus the state and the many guises of love. In doing so, I have also differentiated between Stoppard’s use of both diegetic and non-diegetic aural elements and proposed that the overall sparse inclusion of day-to-day sound effects heightens the significance of them. My analysis has found that the playwright’s selection of sound effect is almost always chosen to make a thematic point or to create a specific theatrical atmosphere, such as conveying a sense of discomfort to his audience. I have shown that while the lyrics of a song might also underscore a theme, for instance when Jan is confronted by his interrogator, it is the effect of sudden silence which focuses the audience’s attention and makes the significance of the lyrics to the subsequent track, ‘I’m Waiting For The Man’, all the more disquieting (24-27). On the theme of love, I have noted how Stoppard introduces the theme in the play’s initial moments by

seducing his audience with the bucolic tones from the pipes of Pan and how, finally, the author resolves the play and reunites the play's two main romantic figures: Esme and Jan, using the aural stimulation of a live rock concert as a backdrop to underscore the theme of liberation, in both the political and the personal realms.

With a particular focus on possible tonal influences in the music, I have also examined theories expounding the use of aural elements and their role in enabling receptive pathways along which the audience may emotionally approach or embrace the fiction being presented on stage. Through this I have shown how Stoppard introduces dissonance and affects the audience's reception by instigating immediate or emerging distortions in mood and atmosphere, examples of which I have outlined in my analysis of Stoppard's frequent uses of the smash-cut technique. I have claimed that Stoppard, with this technique, manipulates his audience's emotional responses with music, and that this is most noticeable when Stoppard dislocates the positive reception of the audience by the repeated unexpected and sudden introductions of silence.

Finally, I have shown how Stoppard's choices of aural elements influence the audience's emotional responses, based on the evidence of the multiple ways in which Stoppard uses music, sound effects and silence throughout the play. I have analyzed the ways in which aural effects are used to establish a scene by appealing to the audience's appreciation of the visceral nature of music or by triggering negative reactions from the audience through contradictory and sudden silence. What I have shown is that, by consistently engaging and wrong-footing his audience, Stoppard understands the power of the mood-enhancing aural stimuli he has on offer.

## Conclusion

The inspiration for this thesis came from an essay topic in which Gus in *Arcadia* was described as a ‘silent’ character. As a theatre practitioner, this description aroused my curiosity, because, upon reading the play, it became immediately obvious to me that although the character does not vocalize, Gus was anything but silent. What also seemed likely was that an audience would find this character both fascinating and puzzling. A question arose: What was Stoppard’s purpose(s) in aligning this (otherwise silent) character to piano music and the penultimate aural effect at the very end of the play – the waltz? Once I had asked that question, others arose, and this investigation – into the multiple uses of music and other aural elements in Stoppard’s plays – came about.

In looking at the theatre plays of a playwright who has a play-writing career spanning almost half a century, there was a great deal which could not, of course, be accommodated within the constraints of a master thesis. For the purposes of comparison, and having already decided upon *Arcadia*, I chose to include one play from early in Stoppard’s career and one post-*Arcadia* play. However, upon realizing the startling increase in aural effects from his first theatre play to his third, I quickly decided to add a fourth text in order to contrast two plays from the first decade of his career. Therefore, after an introductory overview, I focused my analysis of the aural elements in Stoppard’s theatre plays on four plays: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Travesties*, *Arcadia* and *Rock ‘n’ Roll*.

In my introduction, I observed that analyses of Stoppard’s theatre plays, to date, almost exclusively, focus on his dialogue. I proposed that, with very few exceptions, theorists and critics have mostly ignored his inclusion of music, sound effects, and the significance these aural elements offer the audience in terms of their reception of each particular play. By exploring the ideas of sound and audience reception being expounded by theorists such as Steven Di Benedetto, I demonstrated that Stoppard’s use of aural elements can operate on a physical, pre-intellectual plane in terms of eliciting physical, emotional responses from audience members. In addition, I argued that Stoppard’s inclusion of aural elements functioned as signalling devices denoting intertextual allusion, themes, structure and characterization. What I hope to have contributed with this thesis is a further layer of understanding as to Stoppard’s skill as a playwright in addition to his already-acknowledged talent as a writer of complex and entertaining dialogue.

In chapter one, I compared two of Stoppard’s earlier plays, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Travesties* and explored the ways in which Stoppard used music

and sound effects to emphasize the absurdist nature of the narratives and the one-dimensionality of characters, as well as to minimize a sense of realistic historical space. What I also demonstrated was that the contrary realism of the Lenin character in *Travesties* was adumbrated by its association with classical music. The comparison also allowed me to show the evolution from the more minimalist use of music and sound effects of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* to the expansive aural artifice of *Travesties*. This indicated how Stoppard's sparse inclusion of music and sound effects in the earlier play performed intertextual referencing in terms of narrative structure, as well as thematically. By comparison, I demonstrated how, in *Travesties*, Stoppard pulled out all stops to engage his audience in an absurdist romp. However, what the analysis of the aural elements also found supported much of the existing criticism of the play. Reviewers and theorists are generally agreed that the more historically-correct figures of Nadya and Lenin did not suit the play's overall comedic nature, and confused stylish entertainment with philosophical and political polemics. Entering into the debate, I agreed that there was indeed a dichotomy between the character pair Nadya and Lenin and the other characters, and I argued this division was made all the more obvious by the use of Beethoven's *Appassionata*. While others may disagree, I also suggested that the 1993 revisions, in which Stoppard made changes to the dialogue, do not diminish the sense of realism associated with the Lenins. Although these two characters *are* made more identifiably absurdist through Stoppard's introduction of intertextual Wildean dialogue and costume, I suggested that the continued use of classical music as the couple's motif continues to promote an emotional receptivity within the audience so that the characters continue to be perceived by the audience as more real than the other characters, which are parodies of their historical selves.

In the chapter on *Arcadia*, I expanded on what I perceived to be the current limited analysis of aural elements in the play. This led me to include analyses of sound effects and instances of piano playing besides that which accompanies the final waltz. As well as discussing the significance of all the sound being produced beyond the visual scope of the staged room, I differentiated between the sounds pertaining to the exterior and the interior spaces of Sidley House. My findings showed that, in addition to a multiplicity of aural-thematic correlations, Stoppard also subtly linked the two characters Thomasina and Gus as pianists to underscore the links between the themes of passion and scientific chaos. Furthermore, I showed how a wide variety of aural elements consistently developed the many themes Stoppard explores in the play, e.g. distant pistol and the sounds of cawing birds rising

from the trees in the park underscored the threat of death. I also entered into the discussion, to date, on the range of receptions likely from an audience experiencing the waltz and its piano-playing accompaniment in the final moments of the play. While agreeing with much of the literary criticism, I argued that Stoppard's use of the waltz is not merely about creating a sense of emotional resolution for the audience. I concluded that the waltz can, indeed, be understood as an aural resolution to the comedy and is in keeping with a long tradition of music and dance ending plays of this genre. However, I proposed that Stoppard uses the waltz in more complex ways. I was particularly struck by the temporal confusion created throughout *Arcadia* and the way in which Stoppard had soundscapes further the concept of temporal dissonance, in addition to the dialogic and physical blurring of temporal boundaries. While others may disagree, I concluded that the waltz is the culmination of numerous aural, textual and visual techniques implemented throughout the play to parallel, overlap and, finally, merge the two time periods in *Arcadia*.

The final chapter looked at the sound effects, music, and the emotionally contrastive effect of sudden silence in *Rock 'n' Roll*. In the first act, the play's distinct realism is very much defined by Stoppard's selection of music and sound effects in the first act which delineate a chronological narrative from 1968 to 1977. The music emphasizes the play's historical narrative and the sound effects strengthen the play's realism. What I discovered, however, was that the music performs a dual role in the second half of the play. I proposed that, in addition to maintaining the historically progressive narrative from the beginning of the second act, set in 1987 until the end of the play in 1990, the music also becomes historically referential, reflecting the emotional complexity of individual characters: their nostalgia and their regrets. This led me to suggest that Stoppard creates a structural circularity in which the music not only informs the present and the future in the play but becomes emotionally significant as an emotional and referential past for the characters. I also proposed that Stoppard's very select choices of rock and roll music operated on a much more complex thematic level than the obvious 'capitalist west' versus 'communist east' axis. My conclusion was that the music, while also expressing these themes, explored other themes such as love and loss. Furthermore, it became apparent that aural elements were not confined to thematic and structural roles but, by their very familiarity to the audience, had the opportunity to operate on a communicative level exceeding that of the other plays discussed. Because of this likely familiarity, I conducted more explicit structural analyses of many of Stoppard's musical choices and suggested possible receptions from the audience. In doing so, I moved beyond the

more obvious conjunctions between song-texts and thematic meaning to investigate the physical relationship between sound and reception. By studying possible physical effects of the actual music, I also focused on Stoppard's regular use of music and an immediate juxtaposition to a resounding silence. In doing so, I demonstrated the extent to which Stoppard can elicit aural elements in order to create particular moods and/or to contradict audience expectations.

In this thesis, I noted Stoppard's role as a writer of radio plays and discussed how this may have contributed to Stoppard's inclusion of aural elements in his theatre plays. In addition, I cited quotes from interviews with Stoppard which touch on his intimate involvement in the technical production details and directorial decisions during the original rehearsal periods for each of his theatre plays. By including Stoppard's concise yet significant observations on his involvement in the minutiae of production, I further demonstrated that he is a playwright who understands the multiplicity of roles such effects play in the readings and receptions of his plays. Along with close readings of all of his published theatre plays from 1968 to 2015, I concluded that he does not, as he claims, have 'cloth ears' but, rather, has an understanding of a play's requirements far beyond that of the spoken word.

That this thesis is only a small contribution to the field of Stoppard research is evident. What I hope to have contributed with the thesis, however, is to encourage broader explorations into Stoppard's plays so that the textual, while maintaining its primacy in the field of investigation into this playwright's work, will benefit from further expansions into analyses of other elements with his plays – whatever they may be. All that is required are others interested in exploring beyond the realm of dialogue into the reverberating distance beyond.

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